The Gray Masque

Mary B. Dodge

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THE GRAY MASQUE

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With Cordial regards of
M. B. D.

AND OTHER POEMS.

Jewett Heights.
August 22nd 1888

BY

MARY BARKER DODGE.

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DEDICATION.

DO you remember, Mother, when a child
I brought to you odd bits of motley chintz,
And harmonizing in crude way their tints,
Sewed them in sections — one on other piled —
Waiting the leisure, when not else beguiled,
I might, made defter by your ready hints,
Stitch all together?
Ah, those gay-hued prints —
How precious were they while you looked and smiled!

And since, dear Mother, never have I brought
To you, in vain, the pied hues of my pen;
If others frowned, or careless heeded naught,
You chided wisely, or smiled help again;
So, one kind critic — 'tis a happy thought —
Will hold my patchwork worthy, now as then.

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THE GRAY MASQUE.

I CHANCED upon a brilliant scene,
And, musing, thus I said:
"All peoples on this stage convene,
The whole world here is spread—

"Here, surely, is the time and place
To solve a problem old;
For whoso talks with hidden face,
The truth will frank unfold."

Just then came tripping lightly by,
Her step with youth elate,
A Gascon girl of sparkling eye:—
"Fair maid, I prithee, wait;

"For I, a riddle of the Sphinx
Would ask thee—what is Love?"
Tossing her head the saucy minx
Said, "Look in yonder grove!"

I thither glanced where she designed
In time to mark a kiss;
And thus without ado divined
Her answer told in this.

Ah, me! I sighed, she little knows;
Love's life is not in kisses;
And one whose faith is pinned to shows,
The real often misses.

In purple robes and rarest lace,
A queen now stopped my way;
"I thought I knew," she said with grace,
"But that was yesterday."

A gipsy brown, I next espied,
And crossed her hand with gold;
She sneering said, "Love 's slave to pride,
A thing that 's bought and sold."

Later, I met a lithe coquette;
She, radiant as the noon,
With mocking mouth laughed, "I forget,
Or else you come too soon."

A friar in his serge of gray,
  Thought love was fixed in heaven;
And following him a soldier gay
  Cried, "Nay, 'tis earthly leaven."

Still, all on Cupid's errand seemed
  To be supremely bent;
One o'er some sweet delusion dreamed;
  In wedding haste one went.

The gipsy even, though touched with spleen,
  I knew had her romance,
And held the honied faith, between
  Mere gain and complaisance.

But no solution could I get,
  My earnest quest to aid;
Each seemed to speak with truth, and yet
  Love's secret to evade.

At length I marked a hoary sage,
  Feeble and tired and faint:
No masque I thought is here — his age
  Is patent, all is quaint.

I will not mention love to him;
His cinders have no heat;
The fires, if ever there, are dim —
I'll strengthen him with meat.

At once I call for fruit and wine;
We quaff the kindly cup;
And, ere I know, that quest of mine
Is sounded while we sup.

No more I note the seal of time
Upon his grizzled chin;
The lip and cheek are both sublime
Of quenchless fire within.

Soft lines are showing round his eyes —
"You ask me what is Love?
The power" (he tenderly replies)
"That rules the courts above —

"The pulse — that feels no limit here,
Then how much less beyond —
Of heart which makes two beings dear
To each, and keeps them fond —

"The strength of souls that claim their own,
Though silence bar the lips,
Blessing them though they walk alone,
Beneath the skies' eclipse—

"The flame of spirits fused in one
Till life is but one breath;
Though he be warm beneath the sun,
And she be cold in death—

"This, this is Love." The voice was sweet;
I felt the masque withdraw;
And looked in vain old age to greet;
'Twas Cupid's self I saw.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS.

BRAVEST of brave sweet blossoms, in all of the garden row;
Fair, when most of the flowers shrink from the winds that blow;
Gay, when the dismal north wind wails through the tree-tops dumb —
Breathing a breath of gladness is the brave Chrysanthemum.

One is of tawny color; another of cardinal glow,
As the cheek of a sun-warmed maiden, and the maple when life runs low;
Others of gorgeous yellow, like gold in a kingly crown,
And some of a royal purple, dusted with softest down.

Some of a creamy whiteness, touched to a rosy blush,

As the snow of the lovely Jungfrau warms with
the sunset flush;
Some flame, at the heart, pearl-petaled; and
lavender-hued are some;
Yet each of them, crude or cultured, just a brave
Chrysanthemum.

Like these have I known some women, fearless
where others fail;
Blooming in wintry weather, despite of the wild
wind's bale;
Brilliant with steadfast brightness; young as the
youngest lass;
Formed, too, as the full-leaved Dahlia, or Daisy
at Michaelmas;

Shedding the spirit's fragrance over a sea of
frost;
Crowning with noontide graces life to the spring-
time lost;
Filling with cheerful vigor places wherein they
come,
As the air is freshened to gladness by the brave
Chrysanthemum.

SLEIGH BELLS.

I.

H, the falling of the flakes
In these mute, weird days —
Oh, the flakes the north wind shakes
In its whirling, swirling ways —
Ye are but a preparation
For the keenest life we know;
Hearts break out in jubilation
At the coming of the snow!
The sleds from out the cellar,
And the cutter from the loft,
O'er which summer was a jailer
Now are gladdening the soft
Fleecy whiteness; and the laughter
Of the children, and the bells
Shaken loose athwart the rafter,
Each with merry promise swells.
Oh, the falling of the flakes,
Falling, falling, softly falling —

Oh, the earth in dreams a-calling
For more covering ere she wakes;
Oh, the pearls the snow is twining
Round the trees' minutest stems,
Waiting, waiting for the shining
Of the sun to fire the gems;
Oh, the music of the bells,
Stirred to fitful palpitation,
And the hope that upward wells
Through the snow's sweet liberation!
Oh, the falling of the flakes,
Falling, still so softly falling,
And the pure white joy it makes,
World-enthralling!
See! the passive joy, yet pregnant
Of the wild joy that is regnant
When the sun calls out the bells —
Wakes the jingling, jocund jingling,
Wakes the free roulade of jingling
Of the sleigh's impatient bells!

II.

Oh, the sun upon the snow
In these clear, bright days —

Oh, the glitter of the glow,
Wrought of gold and crystal rays —
Ye are yielding in fruition,
Rare, ripe clusters of the joy
That was but an intuition
Yesterday, to girl and boy!
Now, the sleds are coasting gaily,
Down the whitely mantled hill,
And no single shadow, grayly,
In the crisp noon bodeth ill.
Scarlet capes and woolen mufflers
Half the dainty darlings hide,
Whom the ruddy, roystering shufflers
Promise soon to give a ride.
Oh, the chubby, wrapped-up Graces!
One from other who could tell?
Roses peeping through their faces —
Throwing snow-balls round, pell-mell!
And the skaters pirouetteing
On their skates of burnished steel!
And the fun when sleds upsetting
Riders tumble head o'er heel!
Oh, the ringing of the voices,
Shouting, screaming, res'nant ringing,

While the answering air rejoices,
Sharply stinging!
Hark! the noisy mirth yet pregnant
Of a joy that shall be regnant
When the moon calls out the bells —
Wakes the jingling, dulcet jingling,
Of the sleigh's resilient bells!

III.

Oh, the moon's resplendent light
In the hushed, white days —
When above, below, the night
Is with sheen of snow ablaze;
When the milky-way of angels
To fresh stars has given birth,
And Love's luminous evangels
Lie unfolded on the earth!
Oh, not strange such lucubration,
Tempting love to read it right,
Proves a peerless invitation
To the maiden and her knight!
And not strange that coursers airy,
Shod with softly feathered shoon,

Bear the two to realms of faery,
Where ring bells in wedding-tune;
Where the dream-land bells are chiming
With the strings of bells so sweet —
Liquid bells that go a-rhyming
To the coursers' dancing feet.
Oh, these last are nigh forgotten,
In the tingle and the flush
Of the bliss and sigh begotten
Of the first kiss and its blush!
Yet with fresher inspiration
Fall the dancing, prancing feet,
While the bells in new libation
Seem more sweet!
List! in chorus ever pregnant
Of a future joy more regnant,
How the moon inspires the bells!
Wakes the jingling, tenderest jingling,
Wakes the soft roulade of jingling
Of the sleigh's mellifluous bells!

IV.

Oh, the magic of the snow
In these blithe, cold days,

When both young and old o'erflow
With their life's unconscious praise!
When the young heart's ready keys
Stir unbidden with sweet numbers,
And the old heart's memories
Break in rhythm from their slumbers.
Oh, the precious dews of heaven,
Making fair the summer flowers,
Are not more divinely given
Than the frost of winter hours!
Hither falls a stainless vision
Till, above the billowy snow,
Bells ring out in blent allision
To and fro.
Swelling drifts o'ertop the fences,
Burying boundaries from the sight:
Infinite whiteness thrills the senses
With delight.
Oh, the fallen flakes are pregnant
Of a joy forever regnant,
When their charm invokes the bells—
Wakes the quick and mellow jingling,
Wakes the rich roulade of jingling,
Of the sleigh's enlivening bells!

A SYLVAN SEARCH.

I.

FROM tales of rural gods I rose,
And sought them in the woody deeps,
Where held in shadowy, sweet repose,
The sunshine like Endymion sleeps —
Where murmurous waters softly sing
To listening branches bended low,
And tuneful birds on ready wing,
As Zephyrus, gently come and go.

II.

Vainly I sought the gods, yet heard
Their spirits whisper thus to mine:
"Who seeks us finds the forests stirred
By myriad voices all divine;
And learns that still the mystic spell,
Of fauns and dryads, fills the place
With beauty myths have failed to tell —
One God in every hidden face."

THE MONT CENIS TUNNEL.

France and Italy first shook hands through the opened tunnel on Christmas-day.

THE boom of the cannon is over
That deafened us with its roar;
The trailing crimson of carnage,
Dread demons of conflict wore —
Unlike the robe of the Master,
Which, touched, bade sin to cease —
Is lifted in sad folds slowly,
From the steps of the goddess, Peace!

Slowly and wearily lifted —
Its fringes and tarnished gold,
Humid with life-ebbing currents
And burdened with grief untold;
Yet Peace, with her trooping children,
Fleecily draped in white,
Shall over the stained fields gather
And cover the deadly blight.

Bathed in the light of her presence
France will be joyous anew,
Gaily forgetting in sunshine
The shade which the cypress threw.
Even now the voices of miners
Deep in the Alpine chain —
Lost amid clangor of battle —
Echo the resonant strain:

Echo the Christmas greeting,
That rung through each rock-ribbed hall,
As they forced the lock of the mountain,
And shattered its hindering wall.
War and its train of evils
In the past shall forgotten be,
While dawneth a radiant morrow
Through the tunnel of Mont Cenis!

A dawn where brave Faith is standing
With her veil unloosed for aye,
As she looks down the open pathway
So trammelled but yesterday.

Fitting she deems Christ's birthday
For this birth of a fuller time,
A larger civilization,
A clasping of hands sublime.

But the meeting of Gaul and Roman
Is little, to eyes which see
That a babe, the father of giants,
Is delivered of Mont Cenis.
Yes, she is a Titan-mother,
And her stony heart has thrilled
To the voice of the Cyclop, Science,
Who hath ruled her as he willed.

Willing and winning her fealty,
See, they are one in soul —
Day after day have been trending
Earnestly to the goal;
Till now in jubilant measure,
Over the unsealed stone,
The workmen cheer to the triumphs
Which for toilsome years atone.

Thirteen years of waiting —
For the fruit of hidden toil!
From the granite of trust and labor,
Felt Science no recoil?
No; though grave heads were doubting
That failed the end to see,
Patient he stood, and loyal
To Faith and Mont Cenis.

THE POEM.

I.

WHAT'S a poem? Something more
Than the royal fact of prose;
Prose, though masterful its store,
Nothing half so subtile knows:
'Tis the attar of the rose —
'Tis divinest lore.

II.

'Tis a dream of truth begot,
Floating in an upper air,
Sweet as any Angelot,
Lifting aspiration where
Earthly greed and earthful care
Are awhile forgot.

III.

'Tis the something under sun
Which no critic can define,
All the while convincing one
That it is a breath divine:
'Tis the sparkle of the wine
When its beads up-run.

IV.

'Tis of life the inner soul,
And of death the starry core;
'Tis of art the living coal
Kindled on a farther shore,
Skyward burning more and more
To its finished goal.

V.

'Tis the God within the breast
Love-compelling them who see
To expression, which is rest—
Rest, in uttered harmony:
This, the poem — verily —
God-thought manifest!

WILLY'S WIFE.

THE road is long and rough, you see,
Far stretching o'er the prairie;
And if his father went — well, I
Must stay and mind the dairy.
Perhaps an idle tear I dropped
To see him mount the filly,
And go alone to bless the bans
Of our dear boy, our Willy!

A week of days is passed since then,
Each longer than the other,
So strange it is to think he's wed
And I not there — his mother!
So strange, when he a toddling thing
Got all my care so freely;
Well, care and kisses wait today
For Willy's wife and Willy.

What's that you say? That I've not seen,
And so I may not love her!
Not love *his* love! Why, troops of girls
Might lift their heads above her —
Ay, all the girls might fairer be
In bloom of rose and lily,
But dearer than the best to me
Would be the wife of Willy.

'Tis true, he's young. 'Twere well, perhaps,
He'd waited just a little:
A lover's chain too sudden wrought
May prove, alas! but brittle.

Yet old folks often make mistake
In thinking young folks silly —
And what's the use to question now,
She's wife of my boy Willy?

Oh, ay, be sure, some other might
Have lined with gold his pocket;
But I have seen full many a stick
Come down from dear-bought rocket.
And yet, I hinted to the boy
His own short purse — and still he
But scorned the hint. Well, love's enough
To dower the wife of Willy.

For, Willy, let me tell you now,
Is not the one to falter
In doing what an honest man
Has promised at the altar;
'Twill be no fault of idle ways
In him, if times prove chilly:
No need, I wis, for aught but love
With this young wife of Willy.

And if a wife bring love, I'm sure
'Twill make a mother kindly;
The mother, if she's wise at all,
Will scan a little blindly;
For, smooth the ruts as smooth we may,
Life's path must yet be hilly;
There's many a flint to prick the feet
Of even the wife of Willy!

So, keep your doubts; no longer jest
Because I'm anxious waiting
To clasp my darlings to my breast,
And bless their early mating.
I spake full loud to stay the match —
But now my finger stilly
Is placed upon my lips, since she
Is mine, the wife of Willy.

She's Willy's wife, and so she's mine —
My own dear, darling daughter —
If they're one flesh they're but one blood,
And thicker 'tis than water.

Then hold your peace about the charms
Of Susan or of Milly;
I tell you, friend, she's best of all,
This wife of my boy Willy.

Lo! here they are, the precious pair —
My precious boy, my rover;
And with him one to crown his days:
Look! who could help but love her?
Come, father, shut the cabin door,
The winds without blow shrilly,
But what care we beside the fire
With Willy's wife and Willy!

The bread is white upon the board,
The kettle bravely simmers,
The red flame dances up the wall,
Where shining pewter shimmers;
Kind neighbors grasp our Willy's hand,
In welcome — will he nil he;
Oh, happy day that lights the home
With Willy's wife and Willy.

A BENEDICTION.

THE common air is affluent of sweet
Attuned to love divine — for which still wait
The yearning years of human love's estate:
Outborne a zephyr now, with balm replete
It bathes an aching brow or weary feet;
And now, a perfume unadulterate,
As fragrance overfloating heaven's gate,
Gladdens the spirit that it stirs to meet.

The simplest thing will waken pure delight,
And thrill the present with prophetic tone —
Why, just a low "God bless you" breathed last night,
By lips pledged loyally to truth alone,
Touched — through the virtue that such words invite —
My very soul, and made the grace mine own!

DELIVERANCE.

I.

THE bird untutored to the narrow cage,
With fluttering wing strikes vainly at the wire
That circumscribes his freedom — grief and rage
By turn subdue and set his soul on fire
(If birds *have* souls), till, yielding to his fate,
He sings and sings his little life away:
Be still, my soul, and wait;
A better day
Will come, or soon or late.

II.

A sweetness comes to every captured thing
In time, through time's absolvent ministry;
It may be Death whose arms the solace bring,
Or Peace may compass the captivity:
Whate'er inures, fools only fight with fate —
Philosophy propounds an easier way —
Be still, my soul, and wait;
A better day
Will come, or soon or late.

III.

The lion, caught to please the gaping crowd,
May dream of Afric's sun and bite his chain,
And roar his rampant agony aloud,
Whose nearest hunting-ground is death's domain;
The captured fly a truce may win of fate,
And buzz an hour yet, in the sun's bright ray—
Be still, my soul, and wait;
A better day
Will come, or soon or late.

IV.

Hearts break, but not the bars of destiny;
Fools' hearts I mean. The wise man seeks God's will,
And finds it wheresoe'er his lot may be;
Thus panoplied his fretted thought grows still,
Conscious that God alone is Lord of fate,
And that his strength can gird us when we say,
"Be strong, O soul! and wait
The better day
That comes, or soon or late."

REST.

PRECIOUS Rest that follows pain!
Unutterably sweet art thou,
Whose presence soft, again, again,
Has sealed with peace my aching brow.

From some divinest realm above
With noiseless step thou drawest near,
And out of vials filled with love
Pourest a balm of tender cheer.

We shrink away from dreary Pain;
Yet she it is who flings the gates
Apart for thee! In vain, in vain,
Without her help thy blessing waits.

Thy sandaled foot of velvet tread,
Thy pliant gown of fleecy fall,
Thy breath of silence round my head,
Are only pain's sweet servants, all!

Alone by dark'ning shades we know
The glory of the vanished light —
The Morning glows with richer glow
Just loosened from the clasp of Night.

O Rest, thou angel born of Pain —
O Night, that yieldeth Day's caress —
O Faith, with doubtings in thy train —
Ye all, in turn, are born to bless!

Thank God, it is not ours to choose
And idly hold what seemeth best;
The pain, the doubt, the dark refuse,
And miss the hallowed touch of rest!

THE RUSTIC LOVERS.

TWO artless souls I met today—
A pair of rural lovers;
As lightsome and as careless they
As aught the sunshine covers.

Stray moths, that float the warm air through,
Had wingless seemed beside them,
Who, wholly glad, had nought to do
With what might yet betide them.

Along the stone-paved street they stept,
As if in clover walking;
And of the crowd no record kept,
Each to the other talking.

I could not hear a word they said,
Yet quick, returning glances,
Between them, spoke of spirits wed
Like those in old romances.

The satchel swinging on his arm,
His garments quaintly fitted,
Her old-time dress yet girlish charm,
All held me while they flitted.

I saw they would not barter one
Of either's valued kisses,
For any riches under sun
That make up meaner blisses.

And then I thought how heaven comes down,
To bless the simple-hearted,
Who have no care for fashion's frown —
No fear but to be parted.

I thought, too, if the world but knew
The half of what it loses
By slighting love, in shame 'twould rue
The meagre life it chooses.

Yet nothing recked the happy pair,
Of such a lesson needed
By folk o'erlooked, while passing there
Themselves as little heeded.

All unconcerned they dreamed not why
I scanned their tell-tale faces;
And pitied unloved ones go by
To cold, heart-lonely places.

These softly laughed, delighting each,
Quite heedless of the weather,
Supremely blest one goal to reach
Linked arm in arm together.

IN MIDWINTER.

WILD is the wind that blows and blows;
It riddles the snow on the level plain;
It cuts my heart as it sharply mows
The whitened meadow that knows no pain;
For I think of one who is far from me,
And whose life is risked on the ruthless sea.

I see in a vision the great ship tost,
As the tree-top swings and the branches fly,
And I shiver with more than the chilling frost,
At what may be passing 'twixt sea and sky—
Hark! did I hear the strong mast split?
'Tis a fence which the splintering wind has hit:

The rails fly hither and yonder, sent
By the hurricane's breath on a mad career;
How may the ship that today out-went,
Safe in the whirlwind's courses steer?
Oh, Lord of the storm, on bended knee,
I pray that my own come back to me.

The prayer or its answer solace brings:—
I mind me the wind from the south-west fares;
And the giant strength of its unseen wings
Haply to harbor the good ship bears.
Yet hope goes down ere its joy uplifts,
As I think how the treacherous wind-wave shifts.

Even now from the south it is charged with rain —
  Rain that freezes within its clasp;
And now from the east on the window-pane
  It lays an icy and rattling grasp —
Do I hear the crash of a foundered wreck?
'Tis only the wind that feels no check:

Tearing the shingles off of the roof,
  Swinging the window blinds to and fro,
Swirling by force of its iron hoof
  The half of an elm to the ground below.
I shut out the ruin, I cover my head,
To dream of ruinous waves instead.

I dream of all horrors of storm at sea;
  I dream of my own there, struggling, wrecked;
And still as I dream sleep flies from me,
  And prayer like the wind goes forth unchecked: —
— Oh, Lord of the tempest, draw thou nigh!
Say to him, "Be not afraid; it is I."

THE DIFFERENCE.

TO M. J. P.

SPRING is fitful, coy, you say,
Even in your Southern bound;
Like a willful, laughing maiden
With superfluous life o'erladen,
Kissing one with smiles today —
Later, sweet hope to confound,
Breathing a defiant scoff,
Moved to brush the kisses off!

Now, our Spring is much too simple
In a helpless babyhood,
Yet to show one roguish dimple
Born of gay, coquettish mood:
Here, among the Northern hills,
Winter's scarcely loosened rills,
While they break their icy tether,
Tell us somewhat of her birth;

Still, we have to question earth
Very closely, and the sun,
As they sit at feast together,
Of the long expected one —
Whether she in baby-wrappings
Or in shorter, girlish trappings,
Lives, where none of us may see,
Ripening in earth's nursery?

Sometimes we have rare replies;
As when Robin breaks the spell,
Of accustomed winter's reign,
By some rich, delicious swell
Of the song he brings again
From the spice-lands — while he flies
Here and there from tree to tree,
And from ragged fence to fence,
Peering round excitedly
For a place of residence.
Hearing him, we look and lo!
On his breast the tropics glow;
In his voice old summers sing,
And kind nature stays his wing,
Blesséd surety of the Spring!

Thus we know the maiden grows.
So we listen at the door,
Where are yet some drifted snows;
And with gratitude rejoice;
For we hear a lisping voice
As of child in pinafore,
Saying slow its A B C—
Slow; but with intensity
Bent upon the dog-eared pages,
Thumbed alike through countless ages,
By young Springs, that fretted o'er
All the signs from bulbous B,
To the mazy letter Z,
Just as earnestly as she.

Melting thus the frost away
Of the fair child's ignorance,
Little drops are heard to dance
To a music hid from day;
But the music is so low
It will take a loving ear
To be sure the hindered flow
Means that lily-bells are near.
Spring, indeed, is really here,

Though a tender nurse and mother
Keep her out of sight, in fear
Of some sad mischance or other
To her beauty.
So, 'tis clear
That the toying and coquetting
Of our girl is but delayed;
While your larger Southern maid
Flings the jasmine's honeyed nectar
Over field and over wood;
Or, to suit some wayward mood
Just for mischief blows a blast
On the horn of winter past.

But old winter's very self,
Backed by many a blatant elf
Holds with loosening hand the scepter
Of *our* darling! To detect her
In her scarcely budded setting,
One, a devotee must be,
And must listen patiently
To the lesson she is getting
At dear mother nature's knee.

WHICH?

I.

THIS ship, with taut and straining sail,
Goes laboring through a leaden sea;
Bleak winds about it countervail,
And black'ning skies bend sullenly.

II.

That gaily hugs the other shore,
Across where noon its glory sheds;
While, bright as Euxine waters bore,
A golden fleece of canvas spreads.

III.

And yet upon one tide the two
Are hastening to the deeps of night.
Who knows, when later lost to view,
Which ship shall bask in fullest light?

GOD'S ACRE.

ALL space God's acre is. No narrow bound,
But utmost range is his to sow;
Each futile limit and ambitious mound
His own to overthrow.

Two silent angels guard the sacred place:
One equal with the Orient is;
The other, purple-clad with solemn grace,
Claims all the West as his.

The brighter angel, smiling, scatters seed,
That break with gladness through their bars,
Till earth seems even the heavens to exceed
With multitudinous stars.

Follows with shadowy wing, the angel Death;
The lamps of day fade one by one;
While yet the glory flickered by his breath
To shine has just begun.

So these twin angels do God's acre till —
God's acre covering land and sea:
Their interlacing pinions work His will,
Fulfilling Love's decree.

BEST.

A LITTLE sooner or a little later —
What matter, pray,
If the dread summons come today, tomorrow?
If soon, we may
Be saved the bearing of some bitter anguish;
Or, if more late,
A few short hours are gained for life to burgeon: —
This boon how great
And precious seeming! — albeit quick to vanish
Predestinate.
Ah, be it soon or be it later coming,
"Not now," we cry,

As chill the winds strike, sweeping down from
death-land;
"Hereafter, I
Shall be more fitted for the final parting." . . .
Yet best the fate,
Whose unrescinded law refuses option
To shrinking sense,
And by inexorable firmness praises
Omnipotence.

JOY.

SWEET things by bitter are so closely chased,
Smiles droop so soon to withering trouble
wed,
The softest skies with gloom so quick are spread,
And over life, death stalking makes such haste,
We wonder if enjoyment be not waste
Of priceless pearls of time, or rubies red
Of vital power, bestowed by God instead
For soberer uses.

But, O Love, the taste
Of just one joy of thine can turn the tide
Of such reflection, while flow in to chide
Warm seas of rarest perfume at my feet!
Then, come life, come with death, while joy, though small,
Has virtue thus to crown herself o'er all,
And fill earth's wilderness with heaven's sweet.

LIFE.

I.

LIFE is a rose, brier-burdened, yet sweet,
Blooming a day;
Flinging its perfume like perfume to meet,
Wind-blown away.

II.

Leaf after leaf spreads its blush to the air,
Kissed by the sun;
Deeper-hued growing as joy makes it fair,
Love's guerdon won.

III.

Leaf after leaf shrivels up from the heart,
Leaving it bare;
Color and fragrance and joy all depart,
None left to care.

IV.

Nay, the divine in it lingers there still,
God's care in all;
Rose-leaves but fall at the beck of His will—
Fetters which thrall.

V.

Up from its trammels the freed spirit wings,
Higher to soar;
Attar immortal the essence that flings
Sweets, evermore!

AEROLITES.

TROUBLE that shootest in such startling ways
Out from the heart of joy, and joy that brings
From the great, central Heart, on swiftest wings,
A light ineffable, in whose full rays
We should but blinded be — O Joys that daze,
And Trouble, pointed with sharp light'ning-stings —
We would the secret know of minist'rings
Which temper you unto our feeble days?

Joy flashes, trouble falls, and yet we live —
Upborne upon a sea of smiles and tears;
And so, in the economy of spheres,
When sudden sun-bolts through dim spaces cleave,
When meteors fall, earth's airy currents weave
Resistance to the havoc that inheres.

UNSOLVED.

HOW it baffles—the problem of Life:
The sage, who the riddle would read—
This tangle of peace and of strife—
Braves a battling enigma indeed.

We think we have sounded its deep—
Lo! shallows smile mockingly back;
We vow but the sunshine to keep—
Lo! clouds prove our promise a wrack.

The gloom of some tempest passed o'er,
We turn to a blue bit of sky—
Just a morsel of gladness, no more,
Redeeming the sorrow gone by!

Fain, at times, in the storm we would die,
Distrustful of comforting breath;
And yet, if the spectre draw nigh,
How we shrink from the earnest of death!

Oh, what is this something we hold
  So heedlessly while it is sweet?
So tenderly when it is old —
  The grave yawning under our feet?

Ay, clingingly, when the cold hand
  That chills us with terror is near;
But lightly when Time, with his sand
  Unwasted, rings laughter at fear!

This something, whose healthfulest glow
  Is dashed in a moment by pain —
Doom-shadowed — does any one know,
  Or, echoes the query in vain?

Ah, little in knowledge we say,
  Of aught which eternity spans;
Enough, that life's mystical way
  Is ours, though it blesses or bans:

Enough, that we cannot disown
  The portion we sought not of birth —
This bloom, half divine, that has grown
  From seed hidden deep in the earth —

This power that has dust for its mould,
And waits some inscrutable force,
Ere purified, strong, uncontrolled,
It springs to its God-centered source!

Springs upward (how else?) to the light,
From which it has parted an hour,
To find, though in foldings of night,
The form of the perfected flower.

Sweet faith! Happy faith that upbears
The soul through each questioning stress,
Till wisdom all question forswears:—
The problem unsolved, answerless.

NOW.

UPON my bier no garlands lay,
To shrivel at death's icy touch;
"Pansies for thought" bequeathed today,
Were worth a thousand such!
Rare flowers too often serve the pride
Which grants them — naught beside.

No lavish tears that laggard be,
Pour vainly on my pulseless clay;
A single drop of sympathy
Were richer boon today;
Today I need it — but, thank God,
No need is in the sod.

Yield now the sign, or let me go
Unlaureled into waiting space;
Not taunted by a hollow show
Of friendship's tardy grace;
Not mocked by fruits that would not fall
Save as an idle pall.

Fair blossoms with love's dew-drops wet,
And fondly laid in folded hands,
Must hold the grateful spirit yet
While wandering in strange lands;
But wounded souls the meed must spurn
That only Death can earn!

THE ANGELS OF THE DEW.

'TWAS late in June — a deepening twilight crept
Within the garden wall;
No shape familiar its own meaning kept,
But shadowy, vague was all.

A peace, that scarce would do the heavens wrong,
Reigned softly, and caressed
The yielding senses; while cicada-song
Unhushed, the silence blest.

The very measure of the long drawn notes,
So unlike other sound,
And heard afar from myriad hidden throats
Made rest the more profound.

The flowers had shut their eyes, yet breathed perfume
As children do in sleep:
The subtile charm was theirs of living bloom
In slumber folded deep.

I saw through space an angel form descend —
Or in my lulled repose
I felt it rather — slowly, gently bend
Above a dreaming rose.

The sweeping wings were level; only bowed
The star-illumined head;
Rare vesture falling like a fleecy cloud,
Soft, with the twilight wed.

Divinest lips one lingering moment rest
Where sleep a blush enfolds;
And after, sparkling as the angel's crest,
The rose a dewdrop holds.

All favored Rose — methought; none other here
But hence will own thy power;
When lo! more spirits, fair as this, appear,
Each guardian of a flower —

Each with a glory set upon his brow;
Each with the lucent wings;
Each with benignant hands, and will to bow
In holy minist'rings.

Do flowers have angels then, and unto us
Come no sweet angels down?
Unseen, the same, yet far more glorious,
With diamonded crown,

Await our need. They fill the fainting cup
Of life with freshening dews;
And when we call at last, they bear us up
Beyond where death pursues.

DREAMING EYES.

TELL me, O, tell me, the drift of the dream
Floating, in liquid light, over
The marge of those blue depths of wonderful gleam,
That lily-blooms daintily cover;
Tell me the rare fancies jealously hid
Under each down-drooping, silken-fringed lid.

Show me the vision where life overstreams
In amethyst, ruby and beryl;
Or, better, for love's sake, the vista that seems
But lonely, o'ershadowed and sterile;
Thy jewels would gleam in the gold of my heart—
Thy poverty waken its tenderest art.

O eyes, dreaming eyes, I would pass through your gate,
To the innermost truth of their seeming;

Yet, outside their holy of holies must wait —
Unmeasured the source of their dreaming:
Still hopeless I question, no kind voice replies,
And I'm lost in the blue of two soft, dreaming eyes.

ABBAYE AUX DAMES.

SWEETEST place to live or die in,
Lovely, smiling, fresh to view;
Hillocks green the weary lie in
Fallen asleep in *Hôtel Dieu!*
Holy living, holy dying, where each path seems good and true,
Only that the fatal motto haunts us — "*Elles ne sortënt plus.*"

Haunts us with a thought of pressing
All the ruby from the rose;
By an ashen hue confessing
Bloom with fragrance idly blows.

Not alone are flowers protesting; diamonds flash
forth from the dew;
From the zenith stars are gleaming; nought saith,
"*Elles ne sortënt plus.*"

Nought but man the God denieth,
Spurning boldly of His good;
Fearful of what He supplieth,
Hiding from His angry mood!
Better to our Christian thinking, mingled rosemary
and rue,
Than the heart's-ease singly blowing, whispering
"*Elles ne sortënt plus.*"

Through each life some knell is ringing,
Closing fast a garden door,
Dumb to all our tenderest singing,
Wildest pleading, evermore!
But to choose this cloistered living — from the
sunshine seek the yew!
No, ah, no! till God has said it, say not, "*Elles
ne sortënt plus.*"

He to each a cross is sending,
Meted with divinest eye;
To it low and lower bending—
Not out-reaching while on high
He retains it; not rejecting fairest gems that earth bestrew—
We, as trustful children happy, wait His "*Elles ne sortènt plus.*"

Gentle sisters! softly gliding
Where your sternest duties call,
Can there be an angel guiding
When in stone your hearts you wall?
Awe and love for your devotion to our Lord such doubts subdue—
But with Christ came liberation! why then, "*Elles ne sortënt plus?*"

Thus I mused as sauntering slowly
Through the *Abbaye* and *Hôtel*,
Where *les dames* in office holy,
Strive in goodness to excel.

Still I mused in thought conflicting, till the truth
its radiance threw:
Truest souls bloom best in freedom — not when
"*Elles ne sortënt plus.*"

HARVEST.

SUN-BATHED and blest in the golden
weather,
Crowned for delight, or crowned for pain,
Sheaved as ripe grain of the field together,
Covered with love from the possible rain —
One are the hearts that were yesterday twain.

Either has wandered a separate river,
Half of its course through the meadows of time;
Here, at the junction, the flood-gates deliver
All of their wealth from a varying clime,
Each unto each, in a rhythm sublime.

Rapturous moment of full fruited gleaning!
Rapturous blending of spirit with kin!
One in the heavens but knoweth the meaning
Of tenderest mystery hidden within
This meeting of waters — this harvested sheen.

LOVE.

I.

O SEA, deep sea, heart-pulsing sea —
All-conquering ruler — life is brave
To bend to thee, as wave to wave!
Though thou, from wreck, may'st hardly save,
(While every sense thou seek'st to lave
In fullest tide of ecstasy)
For joy, or pain, or what may be,
Through all that serves thee, loyally,
Thy liege am I, O mastering sea!

II.

O sea, blue sea, fair, smiling sea,
With feathered crests by sunshine smote —
In days gone by, I launched my boat
Gaily on thy warm waves to float
For aye and aye. Sad breakers wrote
Upon the shore, how recklessly
A tossing billow scatters free,
Of fancied bound, youth's hope in thee,
Thou shining, storm-brewed, changeful sea!

III.

Yet, boundless sea! Unfathomed sea!
If on the sands thy shallows beat,
Thy central depth knows no deceit.
Where once I sailed I walk to meet
A Form that stands with restful feet,
Crowning thy untamed mystery:
Light leads my footsteps tenderly —
Upbearing arms outstretch to me —
And Thou art mine, Eternal Sea!

HIDDEN CROSSES.

I DO not ask from thee, O Lord,
A cup of reddest wine;
I do not ask for brightest beams
Upon my path to shine;
I do not ask in fullest fields
My busy scythe to sway;
I only ask for strength to lift
The crosses in my way.

Those nameless crosses thou alone
Hast searching power to see—
Too subtile for the loving ken
Of any, Lord, but thee!—
Those crosses wreathed with thorn-set flowers
Which friends unwitting weave,
And by imperfect human act
The wounded spirit grieve.

I do not ask, O gracious Lord,
For bliss bestowed on none —
To know and to be fully known
By each beloved one;
I only ask, Omniscient Love,
Since heart is sealed to heart,
For bravery to bear the thorns
That bid the tear-drops start.

The ponderous cross, too great to hide —
Incentive to despair —
Invokes the martyr in the breast,
Which sternly helps to bear
The measured burden all deplore;
But human sympathy
Is slow to reach the hidden cross
Thy clear eyes only see.

Thou who alone of all our friends
Hast tasted every cup,
And by the bitterness of each
Knowest to bear us up —

Oh, give me grace to wear my cross
A secret still with thee,
And live in the sustaining power
Of Thy sufficiency!

THE CURSE OF CALGARTH.

ON the northernmost bound of Windermere,
The loveliest gem of the English lakes—
Whose silvery flow in the light wind shakes
As it doubles the blue sky, soft and clear,
Or glasses the cloud-hills fathoms deep—
Here, where the shores fond mem'ries keep
Of more than one master of minstrelsy,
Stood the humble home, to its owners dear,
Of Kraster Cook and his Dorothy.

Calgarth was the homely name it wore,
And slenderly noted wears today;
For the guide-books lead us another way
Than the road to Calgarth's unfettered door.
'Tis but little of picturesque it owns;
Yet a legend clings to the mossy stones,
As meet for a Southey's pen, as much
Of the far-away life of mystic lore,
That caught his fancy and warmed his touch.

Close to Calgarth on Windermere,
Lay a broad estate of wealth begot —
So broad that heaven alone knows what
Could have made the covetous holder peer
With a jealous eye on the farmer's mite.
Yet the riddle is old as our race is, quite,
And the rich Myles Phillipson, Magistrate,
Burdened with acres, sleek with cheer,
For the field of his neighbor lay in wait.

To his every bribe he was answered "Nay;"
But Myles swore inly he'd have the place
Be they "lyve or dedde;" and he waxed apace

More kind to its owners day by day.
Thus the days made weeks, and the weeks flew past,
Till the snows of the yule-tide fell at last;
Then the 'Squire spread feast for his neighbors all —
For rich and for poor as was then the way —
And Kraster heeded the friendly call.

Dame Dorothy donned her wedding gown,
In lavender laid so long away;
And Kraster gave to his locks of gray
A brighter gloss as he brushed them down
Straight o'er his forehead, Vandyke-style —
Both faces made fairer through hope, the while
They rode on one saddle keen to see,
And share the riches of far renown
That smiled in the Phillipson treasury.

The hall was gay in its Christmas dress.
Time flew; yet the wassail-bowl still was sweet;
The smoking odors of wine and meat

Still savored of rollicking happiness;
Still, the tender grace of the mistletoe
Tempted new dancers to and fro;
When a cry was raised for a missing cup—
A cup of gold that was worth no less
Than the all of some that were there to sup

'Twas Kraster Cook who the last was seen
To drink therefrom of the steaming brew;
But that was at midnight; now, 'twas two
O' the clock; and the honest pair had been
Home at Calgarth for an hour in bed—
Resting as honest folk do, well fed,
Well housed from the cold, and nothing loth
To turn to their life of content again,
From a scene of revelling new to both.

Like the winter night that lies sleeping long,
The farmer lies burthenless, too, asleep;
But soon from his slumber, soundly deep,

He is roused by a knocking, loud and strong,
On his unlocked door; and by Dorothy
Crying, "Gudeman, Kraster, wake and see
What means this din in the morning gray;
'Tis strange indeed for such noisy throng
To come at all, in the night or day!"

Scarce time had the old folk clothes to don
Ere the drunken roisterers tumbled in:
Some good men, some of them steeped in sin,
All flushed from 'Squire Phillipson's; bent upon
Righting their host if the fact turned up
That Kraster had stolen the missing cup.
Some thought so, some doubted, a search would tell —
In the kitchen, the cupboard — Ah! there it shone;
And the shout that rose was a funeral knell.

For the 'Squire was magistrate — that you know;
And you've thought how the cup in the cupboard came;
Since you cannot forget the 'Squire's one aim

To possess Calgarth — by any means, so
No land of another should bar the clear
Line of his vision to Windermere.
Two innocent victims — what were they?
[Theft was a death-crime years ago]
What, indeed, to his willful way?

Followed a trial — false of course;
Of justice there was not a ray of hope
For the fated pair; while a hempen rope
Swung in the sentence; and no remorse
Softened the judge's cruel face.
Sudden uprose in the prisoner's place
Old Dorothy, bold in her rightful ire —
And the court-room shook with the ominous force
Of the curse she hurled at the 'Squire.

"Fool! vain shalt thou guard thyself! vain
Shall thy hope be to prosper! thy breed
Shall, henceforth, be subjects of greed,

And perish of loss and of pain!
Their schemes shall all wither in hand!
Ere long not an inch of the land
Shall be his that a Phillipson owns!
And in wretched Calgarth you never again
Shall be rid of us haunting its stones!"

The 'Squire's beard whitened under the rain
Of Dorothy's withering speech;
Poor Kraster could only a hand outreach
With motion of protest in vain.
His timid wife was now brave of mien
As though she a vision of grace had seen,
And further cared nothing for breath;
The awe-stricken people for mercy were fain,
But a voice muttered: "On to the death."

The curse to the end was fulfilled.
Came repentance, if ever, too late.
Every Phillipson bowed to the fate

That the pride of the Phillipsons willed.
On the shore of the lake yet is told
That the ghosts were not laid till the gold
Of each Phillipson dwindled away:
Not till all of the race had been stilled
In the silence that deadens decay.

UNREST.

WEARY of all the vanities of earth,
Weary of all the striving after good,
We sink, as impotent children, little worth,
Into the shelter of thy Fatherhood,
And cry —
Uplift us with thy strength who else must die.

Weary of high imaginings of lives
That wholly fail in light of thy pure brow,

We turn abashed from what our folly strives
To emulate, and reverently bow,
And cry —
There is none good but Thou, O Lord, most high!

Weary of even love that lures us on
To hope we've found, at last, our soul's ideal,
Weary, unsatisfied, and yet alone,
Though it has blest us with its presence real,
We cry —
One only love, Thine, Lord, can satisfy!

LOSS.

I.

I LOST my treasures, one by one,
Those joys the world holds dear:
Smiling I said, "Tomorrow's sun
Will bring us better cheer:"
For faith and love were one. Glad faith!
All loss is nought save loss of faith!

II.

My truant joys came trooping back,
And trooping friends no less:
But tears fall fast to meet the lack
Of dearer happiness:
For faith and love are two. Sad faith!
'Tis loss, indeed, the loss of faith!

ARCTIC HEROES.

LITTLE know we who live within
The balmy sphere of southern breezes,
Of life like theirs whose ships careen
Where northern ice the red blood freezes.
We read of Nordenskiöld and say,
With praiseful breath as well we may,
"Brave sailor he, who bravely sailed
And found the way where all had failed."

But what, in blissful ignorance
  Of cold that falls much under zero,
Can we conceive of the romance
  That compasses the arctic hero
Within the aura of success? —
How much the stress of bitterness
Hidden below the dauntless, bold,
Emprise of such as Nordenskïold?

What pain? Not only such as stirred
  The world when brave Sir John was missing;
But pain whereof no note is heard —
  Pain which through lonely lands goes hissing
From sharpened lips in iterant sound;
From shrinking lips when it is found
Expedient by men, in strait,
To leave a comrade to his fate.

As differs suffering, so does that
  We honor by the name of glory —
Of several deeds are several great
  Yet varying widely in the story:

Not the mere pluck of human plan
Is in the courage of the man,
Who watches all his helpmates go
And waits to soothe a dying woe!

Oh, tenderest bravery had he[1] —
The bravery of Christ's foreshowing —
Who in De Long's perplexity
Said, "Go, I'll stay" — his bosom flowing
With love's divinest sympathy;
And who for love's sake dared to be
Left in the wilderness, to keep
With Death a lone companionship.

Close sealed is much of kindred fame
To gild the white of polar pages,
That history will proudly claim
In quick-forthcoming, zealous ages:

---

[1] Jerome J. Collins, who volunteered to stay with the dying seaman, Hans Erickson, and let the others of De Long's party push south.

At frigid peaks stand fervent men,
As on the rocks of Jan Mayen,
To star-like blaze or share eclipse
With Science in her daring ships.

The world is young, still like a boy
  In eagerness to grasp at prizes;
And in pursuit of promised joy
  As reckless of rare sacrifices;
So, heroes born of toil and pain
Shall come and pass and come again:
Some famed like those whom seas infold,
And some in life like Nordenskïold.

IN ANSWER.

"How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope to sing by gladly? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade in which to sing, of palm or pine?
A grave on which to rest from singing? Choose."

MRS. BROWNING.

DID'ST need to question thy best use, most rare
Of sweet-voiced women by the world enshrined?
Thou, whose rich song with richer thought combined
Is manna to the many, free as air;
Is light to prisoned love which may not dare
Or could not if it dared, an utterance find,
Equal to thine, outleaping all its kind,
And which impassioned souls with weeping share!

Knew'st not, my poet, of the disesteem
Of self begot in me by wealth that gave

Two crowns — imperial love's and fame's? Supreme
Each one!
With thee as hope and palm, oh, brave
My life!
In prescience did'st thou shade the stream,
Willing me memory's pine above thy grave?

LAISSER LA VERDURE.

THE LAST WORDS OF GEORGE SAND.

I.

SAYING "Laisser la verdure,"
Fled her soul of flame away
From its bond of kindred clay.
Craved she grasses sweet and pure —
Only grass above the bed
Where should lie her laurelled head —
Saying, "Laisser la verdure."

II.

Of a smaller heart and brain,
She had sought a marble pile
World-remembrance to beguile;
But, she rather showed disdain
For the carven shaft and cross,
Blatant of repeated loss
Of the smaller heart and brain.

III.

"Laisser la verdure," she sighed;
And they thought her mind astray.
Nay! her mind her own alway,
Saw, beyond their worldly pride,
Spires eternal in the sod —
And in them the smile of God —
"Laisser la verdure," she sighed.

IV.

Poet, to the latest breath!
Woman, manifest despite
Man's disguise and error's blight!

She would have her wish in death
Simple truth to lie beside —
She, who shrank from truth belied —
Poet, to the latest breath!

V.

Listen: *Laisser la verdure!* —
'Tis her volumes' finished theme;
(Not a mere romantic dream.)
At the bourn she knew the sure
Note of peace, and gave the key
To life's sweetest ministry —
Listen: *Laisser la verdure.*

VI.

"Laisser la verdure" resounds
From her heart again, again;
Falls it like the gentle rain
On the summer's sultry bounds —
Flowers lie withered; better, best,
Sheer, green grasses promise rest —
"Laisser la verdure" resounds!

BIRTHDAYS.

"Who are just born being dead."

WHO weeps when love a cradled babe is born?
Rather we bring frankincense, myrrh, and gold,
While softest welcomes from our lips are rolled,
To meet the dawning fragrance of a morn
Of checkered being.
Even while the thorn
Keeps pace with rosy graces that unfold,
Do we with rapture cry, "Behold, behold,
A heaven-dropped flower our garden to adorn!"

And yet when from our darling fall the years,
As from the rose the shrivelled petals rain,
And into newer life the soul again
Springs thornless to the air of purer spheres,
So blinded are we by our bitter pain,
We greet the sweeter birth with selfish tears.

YELLOW JESSAMINE.

TO P. H. H.

SIX fairy bells, six golden bells ring out in dulcet way,
And tell the sunniest tales to me, on this chill April day.
Six blended bells, six radiant bells ring forth their rare perfume,
And flood me with the melody of a tropic land of bloom.

Between two lancely shields of green, each golden censer swings,
And, heedless of our northern cold, its fragrant incense flings.
Each chants in mellow madrigals of whence it hither came,
While all together chime as one of a land of song and flame.

I see, in that they sing of it, a pleasant porch before
A southern poet's sylvan home, where jessamines round the door
As sweet as these, as starry bright, 'mid just such lance-like leaves,
Are hung a-trembling in the air, from the porch-base to its eaves.

Thrilled with the fragrance that is borne by these stray bells to me,
I learn by what they yield, how rich, how richer far, must be
The gracious tide of redolence their unplucked blossoms pour,
Beneath a native southern sky, and about that cottage-door.

O golden bells! Ambrosial bells! I deem ye are more fair
Than other bloom, because ye grew in song's enchanted air:

Because ye speak in sun-bright warmth of music's
wondrous role,
And how it flows, in odorous sound, from one true
poet's soul.

A VISION.

DEEP hid within the wood
My strange, new home oppressed me with
its gloom.
'Twas Christmas Eve, and in despondent weary
mood,
I left the quiet room,

To seek for sympathy
Where Nature, too, I thought must mourn her
fate.
But lo! a moon of rarest brilliance, splendidly
The time did celebrate.

As first I saw her face
  Fair shining in this far-off mountain-pass,
I wondered, "Can it be in such deserted place
  She speaks as to the mass!"

Even so — and so I stood
  And hearkened unto what she had to say:
The message that was silvery spoken, through the
    wood,
  And on earth's tablet lay.

It said: "Be still, and know
  There is no lonely place in God's great world —
None lonely where His smile shines thus upon the
    snow,
  Lighting the scroll unfurled."

And in full accents, clear —
  Clearer than any I had heard before:
"Behold, the radiance of love is here — even here
  God's benison flows o'er."

Then chimed the stars to tell
That not the city's pomp of Christmas cheer,
With peal of merry voice and gala-sounding bell,
To Him could be more dear

Than one heart's lonely praise;
And that He sends His heavenly choir to be
Witness of love to all — to those on desert ways;
To those on shore and sea.

No more my eyes could read.
A film of joy had risen from my heart,
I think, to blind them; or the lack of further need,
Had bade the words depart.

The rest I only felt
While standing near to heaven that glorious night!
So near, so near it seemed, the mem'ry since has dwelt
A vision of delight.

And now I know full well,
Though mirth and song of festive days be mine,
A higher, purer joy in loneliest lives may dwell,
Such blessing to outshine:

That heaviest crosses hide
Divinest garlands, which Love's fingers weave;
That 'tis a chosen part, with His poor to abide,
Of Christ on Christmas Eve.

THE BREATH OF GOD.

IT cometh from the East — the wintry plain
Softens beneath the tender touch of rain.

It cometh from the West, and hoary vines
Pour out of rounded cups the richest wines.

It cometh from the North, and finest lace
Is woven to cover Nature's sweet, old face.

It cometh from the South, and all the sod
Blossoming saith: "It is the breath of God."

ARBUTUS AND YELLOW JESSAMINE.

TO C. A. B.

NAY, who shall hold in contrast, jessamine-bells,
From Georgia's sunny barrens of wild pine,
With Maine's Arbutus flowering on its vine,
That sweet amid the snows the spring foretells?

True, balm of flame luxuriously wells
From jessamine censers overfull of wine;
Yet no less precious is the low-swung shrine
That with a blushing incense saintlier swells.

The two but do bespeak how Nature's grace
Varies, to meet the Sun's, her lover's, moods:—
She lifts, suffused with kindled warmth, her eye
To his, and bathes his radiant feet with floods
Of ecstasy.
Not less, in cloistered peace
Kneels prone to him, her god to magnify.

THE CHOICE.

ART'S worthy worshiper is strong
To hold his mistress by the hand,
And, deaf to every siren-song
To heed her least command.

Another, gifted by the gods,
And thrilling to Art's touch as he,
Is swept adown life's rushing floods
Wooed by Love's melody.

Ah, two absorbing mistresses
No mortal heart may duly serve:
The jealous goddess fails to bless
A choice that dares to swerve.

And yet, and yet, Art's hand is cold
To this so warm I clasp in mine —
Come, let her count one less in fold,
And count thou me, beloved, thine!

OVERDUE

THE beads from the wine have all vanished,
Which bubbled in brightness so late;
The lights from the windows are banished;
Close shut is the gate,
That yesterday swung wide in joyance,
And beckoned to fate.

The goblet stands idle, untasted,
Or, tasted, is tasteless tonight;
The breath of the roses is wasted;
In sackcloth bedight
The soul, in the dusk of her palace
Sits waiting the light.

Ah, why do the ships waft no token
Of grace to this sorrowful realm?
Must suns shine in vain, while, their broken
Rays, clouds overwhelm?
Sturdy Breeze, if some sail bear a message,
Sway thou at the helm!

But if haply the ruler be coming,
Drug the sea-sirens each with a kiss;
Stroke the waves into calmest of humming
Over ocean's abyss:
Speed him soft from the shore of the stranger
To the haven of this.

Then the soul-bells in joyous revival
Shall peal all the carols of spring;
The roses and ruby wine rival
Each other to bring,
In the crimson and fragrance of welcome,
Delight to the king.

THE CRICKET'S MISSION.

WHAT are you singing from sun to sun,
Cricket, the long hours through?
Are you telling of what the earth has done,
Or, of what it has yet to do?

The rhythm of all that you drone about
Is a melody vague, yet dear—
So dear that the summer were dull without
Your answering presence here.

A tenderer tint the green leaves wear,
The silence is hushed anew,
And a softer motion is in the air,
Because they are thrilled by you.

Again I listen, and still again,
To your monotone's boundless store,
In hope to catch from the low refrain
Some secret of hidden lore;

For, truly, it seems you know it all,
Who never are loth to tell,
From early spring to the latest fall,
Whatever you've learned so well.

And yet, O cricket! 'twere wise to think
That your burden from sun to sun,
Would fail of a charm could we unlink
Its mysteries one by one.

Enough! enough, on the restful swell
Of your weird notes low and long,
To yield one's soul to the soothing spell
Of dreams that are nursed by song.

Enough! enough, for our comfort here,
That life, like your occult strain,
Is an unlearned tongue whose accents clear
We hearken, too, all in vain.

WAITING.

YESTERDAY'S cup was brimming
To its curving rim with hope:
As flowers to the bee awaken
So did the glad hours ope
With songs of the heart's soft humming,
Full of a deep delight,
As it crooned over happiness coming—
The joy that should come with night—
But, it blossomed not with the night;

And mute is the morn with waiting;
Faint fall the bee's light wings,
And lower is now the humming
Of the murmuring song she sings.
The passionate prince of the garden
In the pride of his purple may woo,
But the queen knows where is the nectar,
And she turns, sweet heart, to you—
She waits for ambrosia and you!—

Waits for the honeyed blooming
Of the sweetest blossom of all.
Will it open its fragrant petals
And answer her earnest call?
Will you come as the shadows lengthen,
Till they fade in the far away light,
And fill the cup of tomorrow
With the dews of a glad tonight?
Will you come, dear heart, tonight?

THE USE.

WHAT'S the use, love, to look for your coming
As bees to the opening flowers —
Forever in busy rounds humming
Of the joy hid in tropical hours?
The honey to hive in sweet hours.

What's the use, when delight is as fleeting
As the laugh of waves kissed by the keel
Of the ship which moves onward, unweeting
Of sorrow sure parting must seal?
Ah, time bears a pitiless seal!

"What use," does my soul keep a-sighing?
Of what use then the birds and the flowers
Bringing summer on pinions a-flying —
Yet with summer joy filling the hours?
Just this use, love, to gladden the hours.

PICTURED AUTUMN LEAVES.

GAY autumn leaves! we have seen you blending
Your irised pennons in shadowy vale,
And gather new glory upward wending,
In the savage north wind's trail,
From the mountain's base
To its crested space,
Where burning hues prevail.

O, green and yellow and crimson and gold,
Out of the loom of the Infinite rolled,
In wild luxuriance, fold upon fold,
We drop you a tear in wonder
That the wind, the wind which is bleak and bold,
Your blushes should deepen, your life infold,
Till chilled to the heart by a love so cold,
You shrivel and die in russet mould,
And are buried the deep snows under!

Sad autumn leaves! Can we wake rejoicing
In loveliness doomed of its birth to pale?
Can we echo the melody of your voicing,
Not moved by its latent wail
That sighs for aye,
Through the bright array
Grim Death must countervail?

Yet, crimson and gold and yellow and green,
Hush your low murmurs, for I have seen
A power that is subtle and strong and keen
To bear you across time's river—
Where ashen garments never demean
The radiant form of autumn's queen,
But on through the ages in aureate sheen,
Bating no jot of her royal mien,
She gorgeously glows forever.

Glad autumn leaves! this benison lingers
(Lifting you over life's wintry wave)
In the heaven-born touch of the artist's fingers,

Whose passionate soul can save —
By the wondrous skill
Of a master's will —
Fair forms from a waiting grave.

So, green and yellow and crimson and gold,
Your emerald, topaz and ruby unfold —
Dreading no robber-king, withered and old,
Shall bid you your grace surrender!
Nay — flame, that the wind in his might would hold
As you joyously spread over wood and wold
In diaphanous haze of a wealth untold —
Blaze on in your beauty by naught controlled,
For art's seal is set on your splendor!

THE PERFECT HEART.

"AS GOLD IS TRIED BY FIRE"

BRIGHT, shining ore there is in Nature's hold,
Starring the great dome's tessellated floor;
But fretted so with blemish through and o'er,
And bedded deeply in earth's jealous fold,
That bravest instruments in hands most bold,
And fires that redden hotly more and more,
Must wrench and purify the precious store
Ere calmly floats a lake of flawless gold.

. . . . . .

Oh! she was beautiful: a counterpart
Of shining gold, veined too with veins of dross;
Yet did it seem an all too cruel art
Which crushed her pride beneath a leaden cross,
And melted all her splendor in the loss
For gain: such peerless gain — a perfect heart!

ASTRAY.

BEWILDERED, Father, at thy feet
I fall today;
Seeing two paths — of bitter, sweet —
In parted way;
And weary, blinded, sore distrest,
I humbly pray
For thy behest.

Adown this vista clusters fruit
Tempting and bright;
Can it be true, from branch and root
Spreads poisonous blight?
Father, the precious boon bestow
To heal my sight
That I may know!

Across, a bleak road stretches far,
In cold, gray air,
Wherein I see not one bright star
To make it fair —

O, tell me, is the narrow way
  Always so bare
    Of golden ray?

I scarcely dare to look upon
  The grape-hued path,
So soft it smiles within the sun—
  So much it hath
Of joy to make the other seem
  Fulfillment rath
    Of some fell dream.

Surely my feet were never fixed
  Firm, in true way,
To hold me thus two roads betwixt
  In dire dismay:
In fear of wrong, in doubt of right,
  Mistrusting day,
    And dreading night.

Yet, Father, if Thou wilt but guide,
  I need not mourn
Whatever sorrow may betide.
  The sharpest thorn

Is not all painful, if the while
The flesh is torn
I see Thy smile.

Life's purpled vines must all decay—
Unblest or blest:
Lead, Father, lead whichever way
Thou seest best;
The longest way is short that yields
Eternal rest
In heavenly fields.

THE CLOISTER.

NO; not an art-built cloistered roof
Shall my poor soul ensnare—
Such veils the grief, the pain, reproof,
But cancels not the care,
Our clinging earth-born heritage we carry everywhere.

To hide my face within its wall,
To guard my heart with stone,
Seemed once a very angel-call,
So soothing fell its tone,
And I so tired and wandering, bewildered and alone.

But He who stood upon the mount
With Satan, face to face,
Slaked not His thirst at such a fount —
Sought not a hermit's place
To shield Him from the weariness of mingling with his race.

The feast with tender heart He graced,
Though sorrow chained his breast —
His cup too bitter with the taste
Of mortal life for rest —
Outpouring love and joy as wine for every thirsting guest.

Like Him, O soul, thy hermitage
Claims universal air;

Like Him, O soul, thy pilgrimage
Must be through faith and prayer —
Among the throbbing human hearts that, fainting,
with thee fare.

Like Him, O soul, thy weariness
To prove its rest must wait,
Striving each wearier one to bless
Ere, thou, at heaven's gate,
Shalt find thy cloistered-roof, and be no more disconsolate.

ALONE.

ALONE! He trod the wine-press all alone!
Mark — feet and limbs disrobed to nakedness
Of them who tread the pulpy grape to press
The juices out, and bid them reddening run:
The burden brook they of a mid-day sun;
And He, with not one equal hand to bless,
So bore unhelped of man his labor's stress,
As one who dared not leave the work undone.

Alone! And we, alone, must tread our way —
No rest for us in any comrade's hand:
Alone, unconscious, do we reach life's day;
Alone, at night we near the unknown land;
On some dear breast an aching heart we lay,
Alone still! None but God can understand.

EASTER-HYMN.

"Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast."

HARK! the Easter bells are ringing;
Hark! the morning-stars are singing,
While a lowly incense swinging
Rises to the light.
Earth is votive tribute pouring,
By sweet fragrance of deep storing
Bursting from her heart adoring,
At the close of night.

O'er high arch of faith supernal,
In communion eternal,
Loving souls forever vernal,
Wander to and fro:
Souls which have of sin been shriven;
Souls whose fetters have been riven
By the grace their Lord has given,
Through his patient woe.

These have seen, beyond the seeming,
Heaven a fact; and earth but dreaming —
All of earth that is not gleaming
With the perfect day.
Breathe they ever of love's roses,
While with John each head reposes
On the breast that all encloses
Of their tempted way.

Little recks love of the platter
So the feast be there. What matter
Gold or earthen? Rose in attar
Perfumes common clay.

Prize we most the diamond's setting
Or the diamond — still forgetting
Whether gold or silver fretting
Holds the jewelled ray?

Thus, of precious store partaking,
Narrow hope and fear forsaking,
To our souls' eternal making
At Love's board we'll stay.
Hindering bars for us are broken;
Silent words to us are spoken;
Lo! our faith's transcendent token —
Christ is risen today!

MARS.

WARLIKE Mars in winter's praise blows his bugle shrilly;
Yet the sweet South he betrays in a moment stilly —
Wooing her from solitudes of her woodland mazes,
To believe in softened moods of his protean phases.

Trustful, scarcely has she sent fragrance on a mild wind,
Than with treacherous intent, swoops a cruel wild wind,
Stark beset with bristling swords — envious of her savors —
Bearing down with savage hordes, to o'ercome her favors.

Tremulous with fear of death, now creep slow the
breezes
Of the sweet south-land, whose breath hill and
dingle pleases —
Touching day to fuller day, narrowing night's
abysses,
Yet in sadness driven away: frowns bestowed for
kisses.

Not for Mars the fruits of love, kindness wins for
crowning;
Shiv'ring tree-tops rather prove how unblest his
frowning!
Tender green with sweetest songs that the song-
birds sing us,
And the bloom to them belongs, peacefuller gods
shall bring us:

Peacefuller gods who fill our hands with the dewy
sweetness
Of the overflowing lands, in the spring's complete-
ness —

Gods whose more benignant sway shall the ruin cover
Of the wild and lawless way of this changeful lover.

THE RED PLANET.

ERE science looked with an unwearied glance
Into the very souls of distant stars,
And pondered faithfully the face of Mars,
We placed within the planet's hand a lance,
A shield upon his breast — and in our trance
Of ignorance, we made his rust-hued bars
A pretext to devote to him the scars
And mantling honors of blood-red mischance
And loyalty of battle. Then, akin
To wildest winds we deemed his moods and brought
The spring's first month to him for chrism — and wrought

Their names almost in one.

Oh, had we seen
As now we see that poor, half-frozen star,
It still had symbolled March, but never War!

"I FEAR ONLY THOSE I LOVE."

I.

JE *ne crains que ceux que j'aime:*
So a noble knight went singing
Through the mediæval woods—
Fearful not of war-cry ringing
Nor the raging of the floods:
High emprise was all his care,
Winning tender love's acclaim;
So he carolled, debonair,
Daring all for love and fame,
Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime.

II.

Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime,
Warbled low a lovely maiden,
Leaning in a rustic bower
Shadowed with its bloom o'erladen:
Thus she sang and soothed the hour
Waiting for her love to come —
Him she could not safely name
In the rigor of her home —
Sang full low, but clear the same:
Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime.

III.

Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime,
O'er his missal mused a friar:
"Flesh nor devil do I fear;
'Tis the rose and not the brier
That can stir a truant tear.
I can brook the brier's sting,
Not the rose's fading flame.
Lord, to thee alone I bring
Trembling hope and trembling aim:
Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime."

IV.

Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime:
Such the voice's hush is saying
Of strong hearts that pulse to prove,
Mid their singing and their praying,
Nought is worthy fear but love.
Nought in life and nought in death
Puts the gallant soul to shame,
Sealing with unconscious breath
This, the creed its deeds proclaim:
Je ne crains que ceux que j'aime.

A SPRING IDYL.

THE dusky shadows of the night are flying,
(The weary winter dies)
And in the east the ashen void supplying,
Dawn's tinted clouds arise.

From dreams of summer on these fleecy pillows
In rosy raiment dight,
Fair spirits float upon the misty billows,
And bring us new delight:

This new delight is Spring's delicious presence!
She charms the enamored air
With kisses warm, and breath of savory essence,
And amber-floating hair.

She bears to earth a benison from heaven,
As though, through slumber deep,
Her soul had strayed there, while the snows have striven
To hold her in her sleep.

She greets the woodland — under her alighting
The cradled violet grows;
And even the city's stifled love requiting,
O'er it her spell she throws;

In hyacinthine showers of honied sweetness,
And tender primrose bloom,
That bring fair nature in her bright completeness
To many a shaded room.

Before gay palaces she lightly passes,
Yet, lingers too, to bless
And gem with emeralds the petted grasses
Waking at her caress.

She scatters blessing and the while she blesses
Outpouring all her store
Her open wealth by miracle increases,
Expanding more and more;

Till town and meadow, forest, hill and river,
Enriched by her largesse,
Give back in grateful tribute to the giver
A world of loveliness.

No more we sigh that winter's pallid finger
So long earth's garden sealed:
Not on past care, methinks, do angels linger
With paradise revealed!

Unless to note that the divinest pleasure,
Within its central height,
Bears sure and clear proportion to the measure
Of life's once weary night.

IN SHADOW.

J. R. T.

HOW can you carol so o'erhead,
You gladsome birds on wanton wing?
Ah, me! you know not he is dead:
You only know the joy of spring—
You cannot know what wealth is gone,
And so you careless carol on.

God bids you, as he bids the bloom
Of brightest blossoms tint the air;
He sees beyond the shaded room,
Beyond the blank of our despair:
He sees the glory struggling through
The clouds that dim our finite view.

Were it not so, I think the sun
From cheerful shining would refrain,
Grieved that the earth he smiles upon
Groans ever with new travail pain.

But joy is hid within the ground
That greater joy may more abound.

So, sing your songs ye songsters gay,
And, flowers, your honied sweetness pour!
Our poet in the ground we lay
Only that he may live the more —
Perhaps his influence sweet extend
More friendful to each loving friend.

Yet still we grieve with unchecked tears,
It is so hard by faith to stand,
While through the vista of the years
We blindly grope to touch his hand:
A hand that served a master-brain —
A hand love never sought in vain.

Great Love! look down and make amends
For all the light from us withdrawn;
Look down upon his sorrowing friends
And give us glimpses of the dawn
That breaks upon his quickened sight,
While we stand shrouded in the night.

IN HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY

[THE SAME.]

CARRARA'S stainless finger never lent
Its taper length to mark a purer fame,
Than his whose earnest life was votive flame
Upon the altar of rare culture spent.

Yet vain the labor that Carrara bent,
Through years of crystal growth, to match a name
Of so clear memory; it needs must shame
The white of any earth-born monument.

Far truer tribute than outgleameth here
Is ruby-shrined in many a loving heart,
Whose thought mounts up in sympathy sincere
Beyond the marble reach of sculptured art,
With thanks to God, who gave in one so dear
The saint's and sage's gentle counterpart.

A STRING OF BEADS.

THE YEAR'S ROSARY.

I DREAMED a pleasant dream one summer day,
Strolling the milk-white sea-sands musingly,
When each clear wave an emerald seemed to be
Of some rare necklace, gold-set to array
The ample bosom where it shining lay.
Scarce knew I which outflashed with heaven more free,
The splendid beauty of the berylline sea,
Or earth's warm breast, bright with the jewelled spray.

Thus loitering, before me quaintly rose
A vision of the Year, in human guise:
A gracious woman with soft lidded eyes,
Holding twelve opals, threaded rosary-wise;
And by them telling what such gems disclose —
The ever varying life they symbolize.

FIRST BEAD.

The Weavers — January.

TELL us, O Janus, whom with dual face
The ancients imaged, as if thus to see
Before, behind thee, tell us if there be
Watch-fires of any kind informed with grace
To melt the mists of doubt that interlace
And dim our straining vision?
We would free
The weaving of the new year's tapestry
From unknown errors, and from every trace
Of known defection.
But, alas! our light
Falls only on the pattern, while the thread —
As though by Gobelin weavers swiftly led,
Shifting in color, shaded now, now bright —
Reveals no purpose till the work is done,
And on the picture shines a rounded sun.

SECOND BEAD.

Valentine's Day — February.

WAN, wind-wracked month, of all the months most bare
Of outward beauty or of inward grace;
Reserved of ancient custom to efface
By sacrificial offering, whate'er
Of taint was held to be the whole year's share —
One day, at least, thy cold, gray arms embrace,
That serves to set a dimple in thy face
And by its fairness make the rest more fair:
The happy day when birds begin to woo
And win fond mates, to bless the tiny nest,
Already modeled in the tinier breast;
The happy day in which, sweet-heart, for you,
A rosier tint o'erspreads this breast of mine,
Sending its message through Saint Valentine.

THIRD BEAD.

Promise — March.

READY is time beneath her brooding wing,
To break, with jubilant life, the brown earth's sheath;
And fondly do we watch th' expectant heath
For bloom and song the days are ripe to bring.

Impatient heralds vaunt the birth of spring,
While yet, alack! the winter's blatant breath
Defieth trust, and coldly shadoweth
With drifts of gray each hope that dares to sing.

Yet still we know — as deepest shades foretell
The coming of the morn; and lovely sheen
Of living sunshine lies asleep between
A frost-bound crust and joys that upward well —
Know, there is triumph for the yielding shell,
In ecstacies of song and matchless green!

FOURTH BEAD.

Babyhood — April.

NURSELING of Mother Nature!
Just because
Thou art a tender child — whose ready tears
With readier smiles, and ever-present fears
And transient hopes, are true unto the laws
That circle babyhood — affection draws
Our souls to note the gospel that appears
In thy soft tints, and gently rounding spheres
Of vital joyousness.
And thus we pause
Delighted with thy game of hide and seek!
Roguish thou lift'st a rumpled pinafore
Of clouds to veil the quick returning store
Of dewy sunshine, while bright colors speak
A conscious rapture in the peeping flowers,
Held close as trophy of the sun and showers.

FIFTH BEAD.

Maidenhood — May.

THE soul of Summer that through April days
Lay unawakened — like an earth-stayed gem
Fashioned to shine in some rare diadem,
Yet which for furtherance of creative ways
Hideth awhile the brightness of its rays —
Now bursts its bonds; and stooping to the hem
Of gentle Spring's soft draperies, kisses them
To answering beauty.

Not for larger praise
Did Aphrodite, with her golden hair
And sapphire eyes of heaven's reflected sheen,
Rise fresh and radiant from the tender green
Of crested waves — though marvelously fair —
Than girt with smiles which all the air illume
Sweet May floats in on foam of apple-bloom.

SIXTH BEAD.

Motherhood — June.

NO more in freshest bloom of Spring she stands,
Timid, with hooded eyes and unbound hair,
Hark'ning on eager soil a voice which there
Breathes sweet annunciation!
Patient hands
Treasured the lily.
Still, the strange commands
Made tremulous the maiden's heart with care.

No! not with lowly fear that scarce may dare
Believe she holds the glory of the lands,
But, as the radiant woman do we see
A form superb within the folding blue,
And cherub-faces smile the roses through;
While, queenly, from the mists of morn set free,
Moves calmly on to golden heights of noon
The virgin-mother — regal-hearted June!

SEVENTH BEAD.

Heliotrope — July.

UR new, west world, the Persian's god looks on
Today as in those other days afar,
Before was felt the influence of the Star
That waked a holier worship than the Sun.

Once in each passing year, upon his throne —
Flashing abroad a glittering scimetar,
And robed in robes of trailing cinnabar —
He sits triumphant, yielding sway to none.

Fruits blushing crimson in his fervid glance
Whose warmth has made their happiness complete,
Drop down content to languish at his feet.

And flowers, no colder lover could entrance,
See in his face the fullness of their hope,
And smile to hear men call them Heliotrope

EIGHTH BEAD.

Pompions — August.

IN dreaded dog-days fervid skies offend;
As once the flaming air filled with afright
Apollo's horses, which, not reined aright
Chafed, and with snorting nostrils that distend,
Threatened the world with pyrotechnic end.

— Mayhap 'twas Sirius's bark and bite
That quelled young Phaeton's fatuous delight,
And bade his hope with fear of Tophet blend!

Truly it seemeth so; for these are days
When sere the air is with sirocco-heat:
The shrunken field lies parched beneath the feet;
The languid corn too listless is for praise;
Yet, still, praise strikes a key-note brilliant, bold,
While pompions redden into globes of gold.

NINTH BEAD.

Sabbath Rest — September.[1]

MOST holy of the numbers, sacred seven!
— Which reverently the ancient sages held,
And by thy hidden charm the music swelled
Of rare old prophecies and songs of heaven —
We wonder, yet the secret have not riven
(So closely are the mysteries sentineled)
If only by the calendar compelled,
Thy sign of grace unto this month was given.

Rather, we think, a fair connection lies
Between the blessedness of Sabbath peace —
When all of labor finds divine surcease,
The while rich incense rises to the skies —
And that sweet rest from summer's burdened days
Which makes the ripe year now yield seven-fold praise.

[1] Formerly September was the seventh month.

TENTH BEAD.

Royal Obsequies — October.

BRILLIANT phalanx fills the welkin's ring,
Gathered the fair queen's death to celebrate;
And royal answers to the doom of fate,
Proudly, long serried lines in honor bring.

A plaintive requiem the songsters sing;
Low, beating drums upon the singers wait;
And scarlet sashes and gay plumes vibrate
With martial splendor, where the maples swing.
It is the queen's, fair Summer's, exequies,
Which grand October signals kingly-wise:
Tears scarce escape his brave yet saddened eyes;
Yet, yielding tribute, drinks he of the lees
Of joy, full stately — smiling that o'er all
This blight of beauty drops so rich a pall.

ELEVENTH BEAD.

Aftermath — November.

WE travel joyously an open path,
Where golden-rod and purple asters glow—
We two together — and with clasped hands go,
Not noting the low sun that shadoweth:
Scarce note we anything save what each hath
Of sympathetic joy in each; when lo!
A hillock parts us, and in darkness, slow,
One walks alone.
Who talks of aftermath? —
Of dreams like those begotten of the haze
Of Indian Summer — when time's languid sense
Is stirred by memory of the life intense
Once lived with June in her divinest days —
Dreams that but cheat the soul with idle thrall,
Since Death, November, shivers through them all.

TWELFTH BEAD.

Christmas — December.

WHITE month — whose stars fall showering
from the skies,
Turning to snowflakes in the frosty air —
We love thee, not alone that thou art fair,
Shining upon us with innumerous eyes
Of earth as heaven; since, too, under lies
A milky-way — holding within its snare
The Summer's Flora, folded now with care,
And brimming with new stars for Spring's surprise!
But, also 'tis, that one supremest star —
The star that taught the shepherds best to sing
And by its watchful, holy ministering,
Led unto truth the wise men from afar —
Concenters its rare brightness in thy zone,
And makes the Child-King ours; our very own!

DEFENSE OF SANTA CLAUS.

WHO calleth me old? Heigho! Not so!
I am young as the joy I bring;
And joy is as fresh as the dawn, we know,
And as rosy and light of wing.

The beard that so shaggy you think and gray,
Is but frosted with feathery snow,
And glows, through the sifting, as brown today,
As it did long years ago.

My cheek is as red and my eye as blue —
And my steeds as merrily start —
As when in the olden time I knew
The way to each little one's heart.

'Tis almost two thousand years, I think,
Since, Christendom all astir,
I tackled my team and was off in a wink
As the King's interpreter.

Some say I am older in years than that;
For they read on a heathen page
Of the world's great history, that I sat
At the feast of the "Golden Age."

But if it be so, I have never the time
To waste upon chronicled dates;
'Tis enough for me that my bells must chime,
And my sled on the roof-tree waits.

The whole of the year, from beginning to end,
I am busy in filling my pack,
With the beautiful things that the seasons send
On the wheel of the Zodiac.

And whether or not you call me old,
It changes this truth no whit:
That love may forever and aye unfold,
Yet never grow old a bit.

Today, as in winters of "auld lang syne,"
A wassail cup holds for me
The rollicking cheer of as red a wine;
While under the mistletoe tree,

As damaging still is Cupid's dart—
  Still as sweet the dear one's lips;
And never the Yule-log's flaming heart
  Can the light of my own eclipse!

So do not believe I am growing old—
  That I lag with a listless gait:
No! Santa Claus warms as the days grow cold;
  And he speeds—for the children wait.

Tirra-lirra! Heigho! The blithesome bells
  Ring out as the clouds they cleave;
And happiness, smiling to meet them, tells
  That again it is Christmas-Eve.

BETWEEN THE YEARS.

WE stand upon the bourn, my soul and I,
Of this year's sea, and mark great ships make haste
To pass beyond, and charm the crystal waste
Of sea untried; and standing so, we sigh
To note no ship of ours careering by,
Worthily freighted and with full sails graced.
And yet because the two seas are embraced
By one wide arching span of hopeful sky,
We do not quite despair who are so poor:
But climbing by our faith the bridge of blue,
We see the chasm passed — we see our feet
Planted upon the New Year's smiling shore;
And there innumerable ships that woo
The earnest seeker to an empire sweet.

TO THE YELLOW LILY.

STATELY yellow lily,
In the narrow bound
Of a country garden,
Tell me, have you found
Answer to the riddle
Which we fain would guess:
Placed however lowly
To find happiness?

Splendid yellow lily,
Know you not your worth?
Surely you inherit
Rights of royal birth:
Such brown lashes, never
Fringed plebeian eyes —
Never such high presence
Was a menial's guise:

Never, never, fragrance
So completely full,
Lived to mock beginnings
Underbred and dull;
Yet in homeliest garden
Weed-grown to the knee,
Open-hearted, regal,
You bloom goldenly.

Tell me, tell me truly,
Is it that your faith
Bids you follow duly,
What the master saith?
Is it that you've listened
To his love's behest —
Learning that the places
Of his choice are best?

Yes; yet more, brave lily,
Know I why you shine
In the humblest garden
With a face divine —

Pouring out your sweetness
  Pure and rich and free:
God is in all nature,
  And his face you see.

MY BABY.

TO O. J. AND J. A. J.

O BABY, my baby, my darling!
  As I ponder my newly-won bliss,
As I bask in thy beautiful being,
  And kiss thee with kiss upon kiss,
I marvel how earth ever charmed me,
  With joys that I dreamed were divine—
Joys now that I measure as human,
  Since this one I know is divine!

O baby, my cherub, my darling!
Whose "coo" is the sweetest of things;
I wonder if ever such music,
So perfect, was born without wings:
I tremble with rapture to listen,
So dread I the pinions — ah, me!
But no! the good God is no mocker —
He gave thee, sweet baby, to me.

O baby, my queen and my darling,
Thou rulest and liftest me so,
Exalting my soul to its highest,
God gave thee thy scepter, I know;
From Him, in his uppermost heavens,
Thou camest to us like a star,
And the light of thee leadeth us upward
And onward as leadeth a star.

O baby, my baby, my darling!
Queen, cherub and star though thou be,
No sign to express thee seems worthy
While thou art *all* sweetness to me!

In thy voice is the song of the morning;
In thy fingers is touch of delight;
In thy smile is the beauty of sunshine;
In thyself — oh, thyself is delight!

Dear baby, my baby, my darling!
Love, love is incarnate at last —
The love that was thrilled into promise,
The love that grew strong as it passed
Into blossom so mystic and holy —
We give it the sweet name of *child* —
Two beings in one made completer:
A *baby* — our darling, our child!

YES OR NO?

AFTER A PICTURE OF MILLAIS.

SAY, shall it be Yes? O tell me, Sun,
Ere you sink in the west so low —
You never are troubled with doubts, not one —
Say, shall it be Yes or No?

The Sun goes down to his resting place,
And the Stars their faces show:
O Stars, that glorify all the space,
Pray, shall it be Yes or No?

But Stars have no sympathy, none at all,
A-cold in their far-off glow,
And they only mock at me when I call,
"Shall I answer him Yes or No?"

Not even a bird on his homeward wing
Will a comforting note bestow,
And I listen in vain for his voice to sing
An echoing Yes or No.

The bird has a mate in the maple's nest,
Who is waiting his love-song. . . . Lo!
There is something astir in my wakened breast
That is rather like Yes than No.

And as nowhere outside of yourself, my heart,
Is the word that will help you, so
You shall look within for the tender art
To answer him Yes or No.

LOVE'S AFTERNOON: A SONG.

NAY, nay, you need not speak, love,
Of graces that have flown:
'Twere vain I think to seek, love,
For more than now you own.
You say your glance was brighter
In the hopeful days of spring—
That your weary step was lighter
Ere the early bird took wing.

It may be, love, it may be,
But we do not waste a tear
On wood-violets, when the ruby
Of the rich June rose is near;
And richer than June roses
Is the golden harvest-field
Where the later sun discloses
But a part of what's concealed.

You tell me you were fairer
In the days from trouble free,
What time sad lines were rarer
On your thoughtful face to see;
That your lip knew quicker thrilling
To the soft breath of the south,
When with dawn's sweet music trilling
It laid tribute on your mouth.

Well, grant it be the truth, love,
That fondness makes me blind,
While I question if your youth, love,
Showed charms I fail to find.
Yet, never did the morning,
In all its roseate pride,
Wear half the bright adorning
Of the glorious sunset-tide.

You say the rarest juices
Of your heart have all been spilled:
By its lees then for life's uses
Is my own supremely filled.

What if purple bloom and yellow
Have gone out in wasted wine—
Still, we know the fruit most mellow
Is the longest on the vine!

LOVE AMONG THE GRAVES.

TWENTY years ago, in gladsome weather,
In this silent city's woodland bound,
Love and I with buoyant step together,
Careless wandered round—
Wandered round and through the winding alleys,
Brave with arbor-vitæ, woodbine, rose,
Fragrant on the hills and in the valleys,
Of the sacred close.

Little recked we of the mystic meaning
(Hidden under blue forget-me-nots)
Of the tear-sown seeds of heavenly gleaning
In these garden plots—

Little recked we of diviner blessing
Than our spring-time! Plaintive sorrow's face
Little moved us in the fond caressing
Of our soul's embrace.

In the quickened flash of answering glances,
In the tender touch of loving hands,
In the joyous pulse that gaily dances
As love's flower expands —
In our full absorption, *could* we listen
To low minor tones, and we so glad?
Something in our eyes made tears to glisten,
But they were not sad.

No! the fount of love's o'erflowing treasure
Is not bitter — and our heart's relief
Was as bright dew merely, in the measure
Of the chaliced grief
Which encompassed us in carven glory —
Here and there, a simple myrtle boss
Telling with more pathos the same story
Of some aching loss.

Fair, a sculptured city rose before us —
Green, the grasses tricked the buried gloom;
After twenty years what may restore us
That pervading bloom?
Now, the lifted shafts make level shadows
With the graves they cover in their pride;
All the starry wealth of the green meadows
Serves not Death to hide.

Yet the city stands today as whitely,
Lifting myriad columns to the sun,
And the same rare blossoms smile as brightly
Fragrant, every one:
But our lives are shadowed by their losses;
Earthly treasure shows its taint of rust;
And not vain the storied stone embosses
Its imprisoned dust.

Now, the shrouded meaning helps to hold us —
Not alone the beauty overlaid —
As maturer influences fold us,
Mingling shine and shade.

Now, no more as once in sunny weather,
Twenty years ago among the sweets,
Could unmindful Love and I together
Tread these wooded streets!

RETRIEVAL.

I KNOW a life whose dawn was heralded
By just such rosy smile and golden gift
As upland summits to the day-god lift,
When orient messages fly overhead,
And flushed is all below with liquid red.

And, like the swelling hours when o'er them swift
Forecasting clouds are made to drift,
Was this life's noon with shadow overspread:—

About its patient wall of effort lay
A pallid mist, through which no eye could peer;
And none could think but that the close of day
Would find it still devoid of any cheer:
Behold, athwart the heavens a rubied ray!
Now, hill and vale transfused with joy appear.

IN EGYPT.

I.

"Tell me, O Charmian, if ever I
Loved Cæsar so?"

AS well assert there be
Of spring-time blossoms such as royally
Lift conscious heads with summer's bloom to vie,
As thus the earlier bond to magnify!
The dawning fragrance of that love's degree
To this, I bear the peerless Antony,

Was as the primrose-scent when musk is nigh;
Or, as the pallid sheen of yon pure pearl,
To this rare diamond's iridescent gleam;
Or, play of light the glow-worm may unfurl,
To that which breaks the heavens with lucent stream:
I tell *thee*, Charmian, the chrysalid girl
Loved, but as callow moths of plumage dream!

II.

Not seeing Antony, I might have died,
As I had lived, mate to a kingly soul;
Believing of life's best the utmost whole
Was my full portion as brave Cæsar's bride;
Might well have deemed my passion satisfied,
Who shared with him imperial control
Of earthly grandeur — ignorant of a goal
Yet unconceived by our exultant pride!
But, seeing Antony and touched by fire
Of his free spirit, quickening fire to flame,
All else is ashes — while the soul's desire,
Escaping in white heat that puts to shame
Ambition's grosser elements, mounts higher
Than love called love has ever made its aim.

III.

O Charmian, I never knew the day
Of tender longing as the Cæsar's bride —
Of weary yearning parted from *his* side!
Enough to cheer me then, and doubt gainsay,
Was the blithe singing of some roundelay,
Or, the inflowing of a perfumed tide
Of luxury my kingdom could provide,
Or any magic, fancy might essay.
But now, I court a Lethe-folding sleep —
For song and mocking pageantry have lost
Their charm to charm me since far Rome can keep
The lover I would hold at any cost;
Whom to bring back the sacrifice were cheap
That a world's men and means should all exhaust.

IV.

Then, Charmian, beware whom thou dost laud
As proudest winner in life's royal race!
He is most brave who longest holds the grace
Of Egypt's queen — and looms for her a god

Where only mortal feet have erstwhile trod;
Who rises to the topmost round of place,
Circled in Egypt's triumphing embrace—
Her service swayed by his divinest nod.
So, no more vaunting of my vernal pledge!
I hate the intrusion of a thought that bates,
Though but by dull comparison, the edge
Of love's sweet trial in this time that waits
Effulgent with love's sun. 'Tis sacrilege
To turn to shadows while the noontide sates.

INCONSISTENCY.

"'TIS strange how superstitions yet enchain
A priest-bewildered people, heart and brain"—
Said Harry to his chum a trifle older—
"'Tis strange, so very strange!"

Just then the moon
Threw softest radiance over Harry's shoulder:
— Clink went his pocket change.
"How opportune,"
He cried, "this chance to see the new moon' light
Propitiously, while looking to the right."

A LEGEND OF FREITENBERG.

PICTURE a quaint, old, German town
To panic stirred,
By terrible word
That the ruthless French were coming down
Right into the town —
On their homeward way
From a Russian fray —
A hated and dreaded vandal herd.

Quicker than flame from street to street,
The dire news ran;
While loaded wagons and hurrying feet
Betrayed a plan
For flight,
'Ere night,
From homes that soon
'Neath a clouded moon,
Would be stormed and plundered; and fired may be,
To sate a bestial revelry.

On a by-way off from the leading *strasse*,
In a house that told of a better day,
Dwelt a comely lad and a lovely lass,
With their grandam, feeble and old and gray.

The maid had a lover who pleaded well
To bear them all to a safer place;
But the grandam's gaze on the hearthstone fell,
And she softly said, with a solemn face:
"My years are old,
And the night is cold;

The Lord is here, and I trust his grace.
Yet you, dear children, may go or stay—
The arm of the Lord is strong alway."

Vain was the lover's pleading art;
The girl, with a blanched cheek bade him go,
And comfort his anxious mother's heart
Who waited the dear *frau's* will to know.
Oh, hark! did they hear the coming foe,
Or, was it the noise of a rumbling wain?
The boy's eye kindled—he grasped his gun;
But he laid it back in its place again,
As the grandam spoke: "Nay, only One
Can help us, child!
No strength of ours
Will lay the tempest, if once it lowers;
But we can pray—"
And she prayed from the Holy Scriptures' word—
"Oh, 'give us help from trouble,' Lord,
'For vain is the help of man.'
Oh, hear and help us, Thou, who can—
That undefiled,
We here may stay,
Safe, till the dawn of another day.

Now, surely, the trumpet is heard afar!
The boy from the window gazes forth;
But all is dark; no moon, no star,
Save starry flakes from the windy north —
Soft flakes that rest on the window-glass,
As apple-bloom on the meadow-grass.
"Come, sister, see,
How the street below
Is white already with fallen snow!"
But, silently,
She drops the curtain and stirs the fire,
For the dear, old grandmother feels the cold.
Ah, fire is bold:
The flames mount higher,
Too high for the fears of the prisoned fold;
So they deaden the glare of the glowing flame,
And, wrapped for warmth in each other's arms,
Wait, strengthened by trust in the Holy Name,
Whatever may come of the night's alarms.

Again the trumpet — but now 'tis dawn —
The trumpet foretelling the foe's retreat.
The crimson curtain is gently drawn,

And wistful eyes look out, to greet
Something betwixt them and the street:
Oh, strange and new
The sight in view,
That holds the maiden in pleased amaze!
'Tis a wall of white,
That was built last night,
Blocking with ice the entrance-ways
To the old frau's home:
The foe had come,
And the foe had gone; but not before
They had tracked the snow in the byway o'er
With heavy feet . . . . .
What was it then,
Had stayed these men
From devil's work in the house up there,
But God's sure answer to faithful prayer?

THE FALSE KING AND TRUE.

ARRAYED in purple pride of royalty,
And coursing onward at the whirlwind's pace,
He nears the yielding limits of my place;
Flung to the breeze his amber locks flow free,
And though not fair within, the radiancy
Of conquering beauty glows upon his face:
Lo! 'tis the tempter — and, through echoing space,
I hear, "Behold, thy King comes unto thee."

Not so! One cometh on a humbler steed,
And while he bears no outward royal sign,
No purple trappings — no, nor anything
To lure the senses — yet, for every need
I know him potent, since he is divine:
'Tis he, and he alone, who is the King.

MOTHER-LOVE.

WHEN spring is young and violets bloom,
And rills go laughing on their way,
When hearts keep more of sun than gloom,
And life is just an April-day,
Then girl and boy in tender troth—
Daisies beneath them, stars above—
Believe to them alone, to both,
Is given the perfect flower of love.

What time the summer lifts its rose,
That flushes with the pulse of June,
And down the vale the message goes
Of wedding-bells in blissful tune,
The pair, grown happier with the days,
Look back and see 'twas only seed,
That spring-time love which won their praise,
Since now they clasp love's flower indeed!

Yet neither season knows the life
Of Autumn, in the yellow grain;
Or grape with amber juices rife —
Knows not its power for joy or pain;
No untried soul the passion feels
That stirs the mother's burdened breast,
Whose wounded child through her reveals
The strength of Love's divine bequest.

SURSUM CORDA.

"For the fashion of this world passeth away."

I.

OLD it up, and lay it away,
That silken kerchief of rosy gleam:
You thought it would heighten your charms for him,
And bring to his smile a softer beam;
But smiles like kisses oft betray —
Fold it up, Maiden, and lay it away.

II.

Fold it up, and lay it away,
The delicate veil with its orange-bloom;
The rose and the lily must fade in gloom
Of time that waits with a silent tomb —
Footprints of care will mark the way,
Fold it up, Bride, and lay it away.

III.

Fold it up, and lay it away,
The golden curl by the baby worn:
Too soon he will reach his manhood's morn
And a newer love than thine be born
To sun itself in the shining ray!
Fold it up, Mother, and lay it away.

IV.

Fold it up, and lay it away —
The love that has blest some exquisite hours;
Thorns there were many; fewer the flowers,
Yet sweet and glowing as sun-swept showers —
As ready with sorrow and joy as they:
Fold it up, Heart, and lay it away.

V.

Fold it up, and lay it away —
Each relic so precious of kindliest thought;
Each trifle so priceless with memory fraught;
Each heart-throb whose image on paper was caught:
Too sensitive now for light of the day,
Fold it up, Soul, and lay it away.

VI.

Fold it up, and lay it away:—
Dream of the maiden, all roseate bright;
Dream of the bride, in visions so white;
Dream of the mother, ere tears dim her sight;
Dream of the soul, while yet lingers light;
Change is predestined — the World must decay,
Fold it up, Spirit, and lay it away.

THE MYSTIC BARGE.

AGAIN the certain messenger
Is close upon our shadowed shore,
And the low message is for her
Whose tender love has heretofore
Been first to offer healing balm,
And bid our troubled souls be calm.

The black barge on the river steers
With sure advance we all can see,
And not a hope is left to fears
That, trembling, wait expectantly
Beside the brink for that alarm
Which signals Death's enfolding arm.

How every oar's slow sweep we dread
That brings him nearer none can know,
Save those whose hearts like ours have bled
Through love's discouraged, helpless woe —
For none beside can feel the pain
Of love that knows its power is vain.

And Oh, the fear that Death may grasp
Our dear one with a rude embrace,
And we shall see his iron clasp
Too cruel imaged on her face! —
Father, to thy dark angel say,
"Bear gently this my child away."

(And he must heed, and he must touch
With tenderest soothing her tired eyes —
And we shall know that just for such
As she, who in his strong arm lies,
Were meant those words of comfort deep,
"He giveth his beloved sleep.")

Father, give ear to us, who pray,
As once the Holy Supplicant,
That thou may'st take this cup away
Of added bitterness; and grant
To her soft sailing into rest,
And blissful landing 'mid the blest!

Then we can bear to let her go,
Though missing in our daily walk

The faithful love that helped us so —
The voice that cheered with hopeful talk —
Yes, *then* — but now, with quivering breath
We wait the nearing barge of death.

SPIRIT-PRESENCE.

WE bow the head and stand aloof
Who think a ghostly presence near;
Who dread th' unbodied soul's reproof
For faults that cling about us here —
That hold us still in error's thrall
While heavenly life is freed from all.

We crave the presence, yet in doubt
If love can smile the while it sees
In clearer light our flecks, without
The veil that partly covered these,
When in our mingling, heart with heart,
We knew, but only knew in part.

Small wonder that we hide the face
From one who sees with quickened sight —
And that we long for some sweet grace
To lift us to a level height
With risen souls! O God, forgive,
In whose clear sight each day we live.

Lo! 'tis of Thy forgiving love,
And that through Thee the ransomed look,
We are not scorned by saints above,
Who, pitying, all our follies brook;
And who, All-seeing light within,
Grow more compassionate of our sin.

And so, as gentle as before,
A very guardian o'er my days,
I see one smile grow more and more
Indulgent of my failing ways —
I smile return: but quick is shed
The gloom that folds the silent dead.

FREE WILL.

I.

THE river glideth not at its sweet will:
The fountain sends it forth,
And answering to earth's finger doth it still
Go East, West, South, or North.

II.

The soul alone hath perfect liberty
To wend its own free way;
And only as it wills to follow Thee,
O Lord; it findeth day.

"LET GLASGOW FLOURISH."

THE ANCIENT MOTTO OF GLASGOW.

'TWAS a labor worthy him
Whose effort pierced the cloister's dim
Uncertain ways; who probed the cells
Of legal-guarded hells;

Whose genius cleaves each rotten creed —
The large-souled, earnest-natured Reade —
To lead us up in tribute meet
To leal, old Lambert's feet.

Life-saver, swimmer, diver bold,
He braved the flood, or dark or cold,
And victims from its ruth he bore
As never man before.

Full oft the river breweth dole
From Ru'glen Brig to Dominie's Hole;
And not by lure of pits alone
But mill-dyes hotly sown!

To Lambert scores of bosoms owed
The breath Promethean-wise bestowed;
'Ere faint from icy seas to light
He rose with darkened sight.

Then, did they give him love for love?
Did service spring their love to prove?
Said he, that simple man and wise,
"With *me* a great debt lies."

And so, they turned them from the weight
Of thanks far easier owed to fate:
While he—he sees not even the scene
Where his sweet toil has been.

Yet long as flows the river Clyde
Above the deeds it strives to hide,
Shall murmurous waves repeat his name
In dulcet notes of fame.

The waters flowing in excess
Shall speak the blinded man's distress,
When daft a drowning lad to save,
Friends held him from the wave.

And long as swells the Scottish tongue,
Though England first the story sung,
Shall Glasgow's streets the tale renew,
Of one so brave and true.

INTERCHANGE.

"We cannot live except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life."

SWEET child of the snow-drift, so tenderly simple,
So tearfully sunny, so modestly gay,
Whose frown in a moment gives place to a dimple,
Whose smiles and whose frowns meet in magical way —

Why bringest thou blossoms my gateway to garland,
Why spreadest a verdurous sheen at my feet,
Why makest the meadows a marvelous star-land,
My coming with undisguised rapture to greet?"

"O Juno-like Summer, yet couched on thy roses,
Whose sweet-scented crimson awaits thee to fold,
I come from the bloom that the apple discloses
To fetch thee from Winter thy heirloom of gold.
He made me the cradle in which I lay covered —
Thy sweet-scented breath blew the cover away:
Behind me, before me, love ever has hovered,
And I love's reciprocal law but obey."

A MAYING.

IS come — the lovely May-time:
Arbutus trails the ground —
Its incense rare perfumes the air,
And violets abound;

The breath of song is everywhere;
The star-set grass is gay,
That ushers in the playtime
Of one sweet day in May.

Not troops of schoolmates merely,
But other folk than these
Hear, thrilling all, the season's call
To picnic under trees.
Soft showers of apple-blossoms fall,
Like snows, upon the way —
Is winter back? No; clearly
'Tis merry, mocking May.

So, each one takes a hamper
Of wholesome things and good,
From which to pour a generous store
At noontime in the wood;
'Tis fun to spread the table o'er,
But better fun to stay
With boys and girls that scamper
In life befitting May.

The time is out of fashion
When May-queens ruled the hour;
When Floras prone before the throne
Laid gifts of bud and flower;
Such feudal form is overgrown
In this our freer day,
When we with equal passion
Crown, each, our own in May.

Too quick the day is ending
With all its pleasure keen;
The hampers glow with gathered show
Of blossoms mixed with green;
And now the sunset bids us go—
The world is clad in gray—
Yet, bright hope lives befriending:—
"There'll come another May."

BABY GRACE.

TO G. W. H.

OUR baby Grace
Has the fairest face
In the babies' fairest list:
Eyes violet-blue
Just touched with dew,
And cheeks by the angels kissed.

Her tiny hand
Is of sure command,
Though her glance is shy the while;
And her lips, rose-pink,
Are as sweet we think
As seraphim's when they smile.

Like the olden god[1]
Who watched the sod,

[1] The Scandinavian god, Heimdal.

And heard the blossoms blow,
We lay an ear
Our darling near,
And fancy we hear her grow.

Her pure soul then
To our quickened ken,
Seems swelling in tune beneath;
As the garden bloom
And its rich perfume
Is sung by the budding sheath.

Oh, our baby Grace
Has the sweetest face
In the whole wide world today;
At least it is so
To us you know,
And nobody says us "Nay."

THANKSGIVING HYMN.—1876.

FOR zephyr, tempest, sunshine, rain,
And all the elemental host
Of blessings, though disguised as pain,
And for the pain, it may be, most,
We thank Thee, Father, once again.

Upon this new Thanksgiving Day,
We consecrate afresh to thee
Our gifts; and on thine altar lay
The fragrant fruit of liberty,
Whose purple clusters arch our way.

The increase came from Thee alone;
And though we plant and water still,
Thou, only Thou, Almighty One,
The cup of our desire canst fill,
In wisdom's freer, purer sun.

O, shrive us of each gathered sin —
The tares upspringing 'mid our wheat —
And let Thy beauty pierce within
Our shadowy copses; and Thy feet
Restore the ground where wrong has been.

Let Right grow great a hundredfold,
Whose seed a century since upbore;
Let root and branch more strong, more bold,
Spread healing leaves a larger store,
And gracious shelter long uphold.

For greater hope, beyond the good
Already ours, we thank Thee, Lord;
And thankful are that unsubdued,
Whilst sore beset has been Thy Word,
Our faith has each new foe withstood.

But speech may scarce avail to pour
To Thee the worship of our hearts,
Whose incense breaks from sea and shore
In Nature's triumphs and in Art's,
Taught of Thy spirit to adore.

And since unmeet a single tongue
To voice Thee on our day of days,
O, bid that day to shine among
Whatever lives to laud thy ways,
And praise be so forever sung.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

THERE'S a shimmer in the sunshine,
Such as never shone before;
In the sky the blue is bluer
Than the heavens ever wore;
On the bay the water glistens
With the purest skyey sheen,
And the frosted sails seem whiter
Than the whitest ever seen.

There is something in the voices
  Of the people that we meet,
Overtopping with soft music
  Any discord of the street.
Through the house the sounds are merry —
  Both in low and upper hall —
And a stranger might be puzzled
  Quite to comprehend it all.

But we know, we happy Christians,
  As we greet the cheerful morn,
That the world took on new beauty
  When the infant Christ was born;
And his birthday gladly keeping
  Unto us it is not strange,
That, made conscious of his presence,
  Common things to fairer change.

And that every newer Christmas
  Brings delight that's ever new;
To the little ones grown wiser,
  And their elders wiser too.

For we learn, however slowly,
  This evangel of the Christ:
That true love becomes the ruler
  When self-love is sacrificed.

Oh, 'tis love that gilds the sunshine;
  Love that paints the sky more blue;
Love that floods the streets with music
  As the people jostle through;
Love that makes the storm seem kindly,
  And the wind a cheery friend;
Love that scatters feast of riches,
  While it gathers without end.

Oh, 'tis love that leads our voices
  To the singing of fresh songs,
Though they only tell old sweetness
  That to Christmas-tide belongs —
Though they but repeat old carols,
  Full of gratefulness and praise,
For the crowning of the seasons
  With the joy of Christmas days.

A CENTURY OLD.

NEW YEAR'S EVE (1876).

HARK — the long, continuous swells
Of the old and new years' bells!
Borne upon the midnight air,
Breaking through the torchlight glare,
Bearing over spire and vane,
Over mountain, over plain,
Freedom's song is grandly rolled —
Freedom's song a century old.

Never pealed such bells before,
Ringing clear from shore to shore:
From Atlantic's crested surge
To the broad Pacific's verge;
From Canadian forest's snow,
To the Gulf Stream's tropic flow —
Ringing brave and ringing bold
Freedom's song a century old.

Other years to gloom have stept,
And for them our hearts have wept;
But for this — in which a flower
Whitely crowns the waning hour,
Spreading fragrance far and near —
Have we only smiles and cheer:
For these dying hours unfold
Freedom's plant a century old.

Sun and rain the roots have fed;
Toil to pleasure has been wed
In the care its growth has known;
Rises from the sod a moan
Where the dews of carnage fell;
But, o'er all, rare blossoms swell
Fair-leaved with a heart of gold,
Bloom of seed a century old.

Comes the new year lordly in,
Claiming pure descent from kin
Wise and firm in freedom's way:
Not the creature of a day,

Poising unaccustomed wings
Is the liberty he brings —
No; these bells by use uphold
Freedom, now a century old!

Bravery in the message dwells
Of our sweet Centennial bells;
While, to heavenly concert brought
By the larger freedom wrought
In these days that we behold,
Echoing voices long foretold
Ring, in triumph uncontrolled,
Freedom's praise a century old!

Philadelphia, December 31, 1876.

CLOUD-SEERS.

"Miserable comforters are ye all."

OUT of my sunshine! Leave to me, pray,
The saving light of a hopeful soul;
Guerdon the richest that's given away,
Meted with that, is a meager dole.

Gladness is mine of its golden right —
Spare me the friend whose foreboding tale
Croaks in the sun of the curtained night,
And grieves the noon in the narrow vale.

Waiting no prophecy, darkness weaves
Mystery's meshes of wind and rain.
Today is blest in its amber sheaves —
Time is not come for the coming pain.

Faileth in season the fruits, each one;
Faileth the gift that we guard with care —
Even our life-blood. Still the sun
Is warming my path; pray, stand not there!

"Out of my sunshine!" Never was ring
Of truer metal than rings in these
Words, that were hurled at a gracious king,
By the kingly soul of Diogenes.

Out of my sunshine! Tune me no tune
In the minor notes of the mourning throng;
Leave to me rather the beggar's boon
Of a glowing sun and a grateful song.

Cannot you see it is peace and health —
  Wine of a better than best to me?
That friendship and honor, fame and wealth
  Lie hidden in hope's fertility?

That blessings are born of the soul's good cheer?
  That spirits despondent, pale and wan,
Faint in the famine begot of fear?
  Then out of my sunshine, quick, begone!

"WAIT A WEE, AN' DINNA WEARY."

A VILLAGE school-room — this the scene —
  Aglow with a slant sun cheery:
A dominie there of youthful mien,
With the sword of his spirit sharp and keen;
And a class of girls in serried row,
Some taller, and some of stature low,
And some like the dawning sun, afire
To reach the summit of brave desire;
  And, as aye, some unco' dreary!

"I canna an' winna teach, an' ye
Sae stupid the while I query—
Nae vision for ocht but vanity!"
With thundering rap the dominie
Out-blurted, chafed by a listless girl,
Whose only care seemed to smooth and twirl
Her apron streamers. "Will onie lass
Mak' answer in a' this glaikit class?"
The dominie sighed aweary.

"Oh, ay," said a little one, "I can tell."
"Weel, out wi't, then, my dearie"—
And the frown from the master's forehead fell,
For the sweetest girl in the school was Nell—
"I want ye to show me the meaning plain
O' patience; sin' ow'r an' ow'r again
I've put it this day!" Then the little maid,
With a roguish twinkle soberly said:
"*Wait a wee, an' dinna weary!*"

INDIAN SUMMER.

WHO is the maiden with a cup
Of gold between her finger tips,
Its amber fruitage lifted up
To meet the crimson of her lips?
She pledges with a winsome grace
The lovers kneeling at her feet,
Who know not, looking in her face,
If shine or shadow be more sweet.

A queen she treads the fragrant ground
With burnished sandals, that awake
Melodious discord all around,
From heart-strings broken for her sake.
Both queen and woman — O, the pain,
At such expense her state to keep!
Better, she thinks, than sanguined plain
Herself beneath the sod to sleep.

Sadly she gazes on the death
Of passing joy, joy passed away;
Sees, where the future shadoweth
The transient glory of today;
And fain to shut the vision out
She weaves a film of latent sighs,
Drawing the gauzy veil about
Her soft, warm cheek and hazel eyes.

Now — all a queen 'tis hers to smile,
And smiling, yet a kingdom sate;
Though silent in her breast the while
Rise pale forebodings of her fate.
Her gorgeous robes, made gayer still,
She clasps with richly jewelled bands,
And ruling with a royal will,
Spreads fair her benedictive hands.

Only a little day she sways —
This tender, nut-brown Indian queen —
Mysterious comes, mysterious stays,
Then leaves to gloom the fading scene.

Yet holds she by the right divine
And dares not lay her scepter down,
Until her cup has spent its wine
And heaven recalls her golden crown.

THE DEAREST DARLING.

THE dearest darling under sun
Is this my singing heart would show;
Earth surely holds no other one,
In all her lovely garden-row
Of precious babies born to praise,
So perfect in so many ways.

A little thing—the merest mite
Of budding daintiness is she;
A fairy being that not quite
Twelve moons have breathed on blessedly;
A cooing dove, whose happy notes
Would fill a hundred birdling throats.

Were you to see her gleesome start,
  Springing to catch an offered joy—
Or yet, the more than tender art
  With which she leans so trustful, coy,
The least caress of love to meet—
You could not help but call her sweet.

So rarely sweet she seems to me,
  I marvel much if heaven can spare
For long, such radiant purity;
  Or, missing, will recall it where
Bright cherubs, full of gladness, wait
The coming of their little mate.

Still, if it rest with human care
  To keep her spirit in its frame,
We'll safely guard our mortal share,
  Not letting heaven its treasure claim:
For lost to us were life's best grace,
If we should lose her sunny face.

'Tis scarce an idle vagary
  To deem it lighted from above,

Since Christ has said "*their angels see*
Always my Father's face" of love;
Since, too, an angel must have taught
The smile, which she to earth has brought.

O, that she still a child remain,
Love's light o'erbrimming through her lips,
Though woman's beauty she attain
To lose it of the years' eclipse;
For heaven's delights are only free,
To just such little ones as she!

THE DYING GIRL'S BEQUEST.

MARK! sweet sister, I can hear
In the distance voices calling—
Sounds that meet my listening ear,
Like soft rain-drops falling—
Falling like the summer rain
On a field of thirsty grain:

Voices straight from God, I'm sure,
  Angel harpists sent in kindness
My worn spirit to allure
  From this filmy blindness —
Blindness which mysteriously
Hides thy beauty, sweet, from me.

All the colors of the earth
  Now seem melting in the measure;
Now a bloom of heavenly birth
  Floods the air with treasure —
Treasure that I long to clasp
With my thin hand's earnest grasp.

But no longer with my hand
  May I gather scattered roses;
In death's near and noiseless land
  Nerveless all reposes:
Oh, I grieve for your dear sake,
From the world these hands to take!

Hands that learned of love and need
  And of deftness, arts of beauty,

All the while their homely creed,
Just to do their duty.
Skilled at last to do and know,
Must they from you idly go?

But God orders all things well;
List! the angel voices clearer —
Was that, dear, a curtain fell?
Come, sweet, nearer, nearer.
Hold them — something says to me:
"*Your hands are her legacy.*"

Now, my sister, all is peace;
All is won for which I've striven;
Love in trust has found release,
Bliss to faith is given —
Rapturous music fills the air,
Crowned at length is work and prayer.

SUNDOWN.

I.

WHERE sky begins or sea-line ends
In yon horizon's mysteries,
No eye can mark, so softly blends
The sea's and sky's infinities:
The blue sea wears a crown of flame,
The rosy clouds drink sapphire dew,
Till, melted into each, no name
Of human thought defines the hue.

II.

And thus the mortal life, meseems,
At waning tide shall woven be
With life immortal — earth's best dreams
And heaven's blent in harmony;
Till only infinite wisdom knows
The word, beyond our speech's range,
To paint the mystic light that throws
Its veil of peace about the change.

LOVE'S SIGNET.

TO LEONARD.

FIVE years old is the beautiful fellow?
Five years old did you say, next May,
Yet, now, while the corn-field still is yellow,
His birthday verse you would have today?

Well — now or later, be even chances,
If music I mate to a boy's fair grace,
Whose hair just a frolic of sunshine dances
Ring upon ring round a rosy face.

Whose eye has sparkles of heaven within it,
Blue as a sapphire, blue as the sea,
Changing with sentiment every minute,
Bonny and blithe as an eye can be.

Save that I know he was born of woman,
I could think that an angel came to earth,

And cradled him soft in a bosom human,
His eyes the clue to his cherub birth.

Yet true, did an angel come, down-winging —
Since Love is the angel truest, best —
Come to the mother-breast softly singing,
And folded his wings for a mortal rest.

So here is the key to the starry splendor
Of two blue eyes to the heavens leal —
Over their nesting-place Love broods tender,
And Love on the boy has set his seal.

THE SWEETENER.

SPRING blossom, rose of June and Autumn cluster,
Appeal alike to the glad eye of health,
In whose spontaneous, overflowing luster,
Is half the secret of the seasons' wealth.

The pallid cheek may warm to apple flushes,
  The fevered hand clasp fondly sweets of June,
The languid palate leap to fruitage luscious,
  Yet weary of their day before the noon.

'Tis laughing Health, with an unhindered fountain
  Of joy upbubbling from her being's core,
Whose lavish life embraces vale or mountain —
  Who drains delight at every opened door.

LOVE AND REST.

"Love is sweeter than rest." — *Henry Timrod.*

REST will soon be granted, dear —
  Think of all the bliss
When you reach the brighter sphere,
  Lifted free of this!
Home, and rest, and palms, and peace,
  Verily, such gain
O'er the losses of release
  Balances the pain!"

"Yea; but human love to me
Is so near divine,
That my heart clings yearningly
Even to life like mine.
Love is sweeter far than rest—
That alone I know—
And the soul that loves me best
Will not let me go."

"Home, and rest, and heaven, dear,
Love is in them all!
Tenderest love is given, dear,
In the Saviour's call;
He would lift your face to his,
Fold you to his breast,
Teach you what a crowning 'tis
When *He* offers rest!"

Rest is sweet—how well I know—
Rest that follows care,
When the tired sun droppeth low,
And beside my chair

Listens one while I repeat,
By her love caressed:
"Ah, my darling, love is sweet,
Sweeter even than rest."

"Yet, belovéd, more than we
Understand, he gives
Unto him who trustfully
In his promise lives;
Measure all the bliss we can —
It must be believed —
Never has the heart of man
Perfect joy conceived!"

"True, ah, true, and well I mark
All your words would teach;
And my soul beyond the dark
Stretches forth to reach
Faith yet fuller, more complete,
While my lips attest
It is love makes heaven sweet:
Love is more than rest!"

LOCO.

TRANSCRIPT OF AN EXPERIENCE OF . . . IN ARIZONA.

NAY, say not the red man of romance
Is a creature of fancy, and fled
Is all of the glory that crowned him —
But say of his hope: *It is dead.*

It was down in the wilds of San Carlos,
In the shade of an ended day,
That I found, as often had happened,
In my room an Indian lay.

Vexed at the calm intrusion,
Yu-ka-shee,[1] cried I, then;
And moved by a rash impatience,
Yu-ka-shee — once again.

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[1] *Yu-ka-shee* is a liberal Indian spelling for "get out."

Slowly a tall form heightened,
Drawing its length from the floor;
And slowly a stalwart figure
Passed passively through the door.

The darkness covered his features,
But through it a stifled sigh
Quivered, in hushed deprecation,
On a chieftain's lip to die.

I followed out into the plaza,
And there, with his shoulders bowed,
His head on his hand, stood Loco,
(Peerless among the proud)

Thoughtful, subdued in the gloaming;
His heart as his head low bent,
Sighing, no doubt, in silence,
Over a faith misspent.

Humbly I asked for pardon;
Royal, he smiled release

Of penance; and soon together
We were smoking the pipe of peace.

Now, after a twelve months' waning,
This is the news I learn:
"Loco is off on the war-path
With sixty bucks," that burn

For revenge on the pale-faced traitors;
Who led them from homes more fair,
To the desolate reservation
Of San Carlos — holding them there.

(Holding the few that trusted
While many — Victorio's band —
Chose rather the freedom of outlaws
Than shelter on alien land.)

Brave Loco believed in the *Nan-tan*[1] —
(Who yet would their wrongs atone;
Who, out of their wintry troubles
Would lift them into his sun) —

[1] The father at Washington.

Till, shamed in the trust, his spirit
So gentle, so gracious, so strong,
Now yields the lamb to the lion,
To the war-whoop the evening song.

Ah, who that has seen can wonder?
These warriors forced to sue
A power not always benignant,
For each passport! Say, could you?

And how are you more than Loco,
Though lily-white to his red?
Powerful-limbed, handsome is Loco,
With a courteous grace inbred;

And lovely is Loco's daughter;
And beautiful Loco's wife:
I have seen them all, and I show you
The trio true to life.

And, too, a radiant baby,
Upheld in the mother's arms—
Models for Bouguereau's canvas,
With their dusk and brilliant charms.

Such as these, in tutelage painful
Would you trammel, and tell them when
And just how long they may wander
At liberty from their pen?

For an hour, or a day, it may be —
Only a furlough's space —
And always with this condition,
That overstay brings disgrace:

The calaboose and hard labor —
Well — the calaboose needs to be
Kept in supply of sinew
To serve at the Agency!

Yet why this profitless protest?
Where the fault is will follow the ban,
White or red man in error; yet, Loco,
Forsooth is a chivalrous man.

Hark! a later dispatch: "Killed is Loco."
If fallen, an outlaw he fell;
And were he than all men more noble,
The answer must be: It is well.

TO A CRUSHED VIOLET.

TIMID violet, sadly shrinking
From the help that I essay,
Fain would I with freshest dew-drops,
All your weariness allay —
Yet I give you what I may.

Must you always droop your eye-lids
O'er the love-light treasured deep?
Nay — around you, spread your purple;
Do not such low vigil keep,
Hiding eyes not made to weep.

Yet your presence is so fragrant,
Making all my world so sweet,
I have not the heart to murmur
That my glance you will not meet,
Earnestly though I entreat.

Bending thus and shedding perfume
Is so sad, there seems to be
In your form but music's echo —
Music from all gladness free:
Pale, and in a minor key.

Still, I wis, above your sadness
Of a song to drown its moan —
'Tis of tender love in waiting:
Will not love, true love, atone
For the lost joy you have known?

Yes, I think my love has saved you:
Lifted, darling, is your head!
Light from gracious depth is welling —
Now, at last my hope is fed,
Beauty unto life re-wed.

Now — but no; I'll hold the measure,
Lest to careless gaze I show
All the story, quickened violet!
'Tis enough for me to know
Love's sweet secret, singing low.

MIGNONETTE.

MY sweetheart to my heart I hold,
Not only for the sweetness
Of inner life she doth unfold,
But womanhood's completeness!
And I have plucked a charming flower, her name
in sign to set —
A rare-souled flower of dainty mold:
Exquisite Mignonette.

This fragrant bloom of garden birth
Is modest, yet persuasive,
Because the sweet it saps from earth
By fullness is invasive.
'Tis truest measure of my love of all the flowers
I've met:
An *herbe d'amour — petite* in girth,
Delicious Mignonette!

Yet flowers no answering passion prove,
Though sanguine-tipped in color;
And in this one, I'm sure, my love
Wakes envy's tint of dolor.
Oh, well I know not any sign could aught of grace beget,
So pure and peerless as my dove —
My precious Mignonette!

But still my heart leaps up to say —
For just the mere suggestion
Which comes with a réséda-spray —
That far beyond all question
Of loveliness in other flowers — though rose or violet —
To me, none other can betray
The charm of Mignonette.

THE FLUSHED FIRMAMENT.

1883–84.

FROM eastern bound to west, from north to south,
O'er torrid lands and seas of icy beds,
O'er fruitful fields and deserts given to drouth,
The sun unwonted crimson glory spreads.

In cities where the sky, a narrow belt,
Showed ruddy flame without the tender grace
Of marginal tints, that in each other melt,
The people cried, "'Tis fire that we must face."

But when they found the welkin broadly glows
With blood-red hues long after set of sun —
Saw that the dawn a roseate splendor shows
Before her gold and silver threads are spun —

Then said they, "What is this new thing we see —
This change of order in the ordered ways

Of morn and eve? The end must surely be!
Such sign portends the earth's completed days."

The wiser ones in answer to such fear:
"'Tis cosmic dust." "No doubt, the comet's tail
Has stirred commotion in the nebulous sphere."
"Lo! 'tis volcanic breath." But still they fail

To solve assured, the problem of the day—
Whether it bodes an elemental war,
Or nature's thousand years of peaceful sway;—
Ah, not exhausted is God's repertoire

Of miracles and marvels! There is yet
Untold divineness of the Holy One,
To wake our worship and our pride to fret,
Who say there is no new thing under sun.

For if there be no new thing, still there is
How much of old unconquered yet to learn!
Our boasted wisdom—what a failure 'tis,
Which proves not whence the heavens so blushing burn!

GOLD WORSHIP.

A CHRONICLE OF REALMAH.

WHEN the old Earth, changing still,
Was so young that yonder hill
Which appears to us primeval,
Was not thought of for upheaval
By the force pervading all,
Throve a now sub-aqueous city, which Abibah men
did call.

There they worshiped, even then
With a worship that again
And again has found renewal,
Many gods, some kind, some cruel: —
These strange gods of divers claims
Won the service of the people who bowed down
with divers aims.

One there was among the Blest,
So uplifted o'er the rest,
That he suffered no beguilement
To atone for sin's defilement.
He so sacred was enshrined —
On such heights — that but to name him, few were holily inclined.

And so little wise were they,
That the goddess holding sway
Over love — Blastessa Koolie —
With a power for blessing truly,
Scarcely heard an Ave said:
While unnumbered the devotions unto Koomrah-Kamah paid.

Mammon was he, be it known;
The same god that many own
Bowing unto him sincerely;
Thinking not they pay too dearly
Trampling out diviner things,
If a harvest they but gather of the substance that he brings.

Naively, too, the legend tells
That this "heaper up of shells"
(Which is literal translation
Of the god's name and vocation)
Was of all besought the most
By these pagans for the favors that they craved at any cost.

Pagans! Yes; we've writ our rhyme
Just because there seems to chime
With such heathenish unreason,
A like worship in *this* season—
When, if truth it be we're told,
Health and happiness and honor, all are sacrificed for gold!

A NUPTIAL SONNET.

DEAR artist-friend, 'tis meet the rounded year,
With fluctuant wealth of color, should bring all
To grace your daughter's spousals; meet ye call
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter to appear,
And circle as blithe maidens one so dear:—
Fresh apple-bloom, whose sweets in showers fall;
Pure, pink June roses, fragrant to enthrall;
October's flame; and Winter's holly-cheer!—
True symbols they, while answering Love's behest,
And yielding service to the bride so fair,
Of what to the Creator's work — His best —
He bade to perfect it: each season's care,
That so the favored spirit, tended, blest,
May lack no jewel in its crown to wear!

Brooklyn.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LOURDES.

IN Charlemagne's beautiful Gaul,
Where the mountains make love to the sea—
Where they rise as the sentinel wall
'Twixt *Navarre* and *les Hautes-Pyrenees*—
Lies a valley by green hills embraced:
A valley whose peace is assured,
So remote it is; quiet, and graced
By the picturesque village of *Lourdes*.

Famed far is the village and near;
And pilgrims flock thither today,
As erst they have done year on year,
(For a score at least) faring that way
To lay down some burden of ill
That the body is heir to; all cured,
If the chronicle found there reveal
Only truth of the fountain of *Lourdes*.

The charm of the magical spot
Grew out of a vision, it seems,
That came to a child — Bernadotte:
The Virgin appeared in his dreams —
Yes, his dreams — and thereupon gushed,
By the power of her virtue adjured,
The miracle-water that rushed
For the balm of believers at *Lourdes*.

This legend of France has sufficed
Not a few of the faithful. Yet, lo!
The wiser — by vision of Christ
In the likeness of babyhood — go
To the fount whence true healing springs forth;
Love crowning the life thus ensured:
Oh, the old Christmas-story is worth
A thousand of legends of *Lourdes!*

Still, all the old stories are sweet,
That teach us our evils to lave
In mystical waters, that meet
The need of the good which we crave.

But the one that is sweetest and best
Is of Bethlehem: told, half obscured
In the others; ay, told with the rest
In the tale of the fountain of *Lourdes*.

A TRUISM

OF DOUGLAS JERROLD.

I.

MAN is only as old as he feels."
Truly, 'tis truth!
Whatever gray Time with his sickle steals,
He cannot steal youth
From one whose heart and whose hand obey
The exultant strength of their primal day.

III.

"A man is only as old as he feels"—
The fact remains—
Yet let us suppose Time suddenly deals
Rheumatic pains,
That stiffen the limbs, crack heart and phiz—
Then, surely, a man feels old as he is.

GONE.

GONE is the pride of her circle:
So regal, so rare, so unique,
Her fashion of form and of spirit,
The like we need none of us seek!
Yet all is not gone with her beauty
Not vanished is all with her grace.
The faith which she cherished still liveth,
To brighten her sorrowful place.

The love she reflected yet shineth,
To gladden our shadowy ways,
Though dashed is the beautiful crystal
That gathered and scattered the rays.
O, clear was the crystal and polished,
And clearly the love-light passed through —
The Light that forever is shining,
The darkness of night to subdue.

The dew of the morning, translucent,
Was scarce more transparent than she,
Who freely gave others the water
Of life that to her was so free:
She held it in cup of the lily;
She held it in cup of the rose;
And gave without stint to the thirsting,
Like any sweet blossom that grows;

Like any fair blossom that lifteth
Its chalice for human delight;
And poureth, for comfort, its fragrance
Far into the dusk of the night;

Like any fair blossom that praiseth
The Maker in glory of bloom;
And praiseth him still in the attar
That cannot be buried in gloom.

Yet, gone is the pride of her circle:—
A woman whose spirit was rife
As a bird's, with the rhythm of singing;
Gone, gone is a charm from the life
Of all who have known her and loved her;
Yes, gone is her beauty and grace,
But her pure faith, so child-like, abideth,
To brighten her sorrowful place.

Philadelphia.

[The wife of General C——, U. S. A., was a woman of rare beauty of person, of remarkable simplicity of faith and character, and withal a charming improvisatrice.]

THE WISDOM OF SORROW.

I.

WHEN love's presence was the guerdon
Sure to crown the day-task done;
When the air grew soft and sweet
Quickened by love's coming feet;
When but tenderest hint of sorrow
Lay in doubting if tomorrow
Jealous, might hold back love's hand,
Then I did not understand
How could fall a hopeless burden
On the breast of any one,
Underneath God's sun.

II.

Once I taught heroic lesson
(Ah, so little teachers know)
Unto them, with brooding air,
Who seemed yielding to despair;

And I chided them for sadness
That o'erlooked life's dower of gladness;
But I did not understand
How the loosing of a hand,
Like the unstrung note we press on,
Out of which rude discords grow,
May turn joy to woe.

III.

Now, I feel pain's presence keenly,
(Teacher taught at last to know)
Since no more my ear may greet
The rhythm of two coming feet;
Since no more the night advances
Luminous with looked-for glances;
Since I may not clasp love's hand,
Now, indeed, I understand
How one may not meet serenely,
Common things which lack the glow
Rounded hopes bestow.

IV.

Now, I kneel in deep contrition
Low, before the weeping host
Of earth's mourners who make moan —
Begging grace in minor tone
For a sympathy withholden!
— Still afloat in ether golden,
Joy beside us hand in hand,
How should we yet understand
Sorrow of late recognition,
Only learned at bitter cost
Of heart-treasure lost?

THE FROZEN CREW.

NEAR by the light-house, whose lamp is lit
By a brand from the sun which is firing it,

Doubling the gleams from the west that quiver,
A crystal ship lies out on the river.

Frost-woven sheets to the wind are furled;
Frost-bound the streamer on topmast curled;

Reef-band and mainsail are frozen stark —
A shimmering specter, the glassy bark!

Crisp cordage of ice was spun last night
By the breath of the storm in its mystic might;

Chill was the touch that chilled the men,
Who strove to lower the sails again;

But it conquered them all in its silver snare,
And fashioned a shroud for the bravest there!

Only a day, from the harbor-bar
Had the canvas filled for its port afar;

Only a day, or breezes brave
Had challenged the bark to clear the wave;

Only a day of quickened life,
As the air with pulses of health was rife,

Had this ship with its store of golden corn
Over the gladdened sea been borne;

When feathery flakes began to fall,
And the king of the storm outspake, to call

To his aid the help of wind and sleet —
Furies that came on hurrying feet,

And blinded the men, and clouded the air
With a wonder that ever is wondrous fair:

A spell that a siren might weave in hate
To lure her victim to helpless fate;

Yet never so mockingly cruel as when
One, the most fearless among the men,

Sprang to the top with heart to dare,
And was frozen stiff to the cross-tree there!

Long the battle with wind and hail;
One by one the stout hearts fail;

One by one they are frost-numbed all —
The gallant crew in their icy thrall!

Breaks the morning in smiles once more;
Turned is the weird ship back to shore;

Slowly it ploughs the sea-slush through —
The ghostly ship with its silent crew —

Till out from the light-house succor comes,
And the men are borne to sorrowing homes : —

Some to yield to an endless night,
Blind to the blessing of cheerful light ;

Some to suffer a torturing pain,
As the sealed life-current is loosed again,

Or, to cry, in the fever of struggling breath,
To the man aloft who is dumb with Death —

While the mute ship lies a spectral sight,
Clad in its vestments of shining white,

Unwarmed by the flames from the west which dip
To kindle the hold of the crystal ship,

And halo the head of the sleeping man
Who froze at his post when the storm began.

TOMORROW.

TOMORROW — a beautiful day —
Is waiting for you and for me;
Bluest skies of ethereal ray
Are impatient the shadows to flee.
Why care if the landscape be sullen and gray?
Tomorrow will chase all the cloud-racks away.

Tomorrow, you say may be dull
With the leaden-hued face of today.
There's a morrow whose measure is full
Of joy never spilled by delay!
If today born of yesterday baffle our will,
Tomorrow, tomorrow is radiant still.

Tomorrow is mantled in white,
As pure as the soft falling snow
That rounds into waves of delight
To cover earth's pitiful woe.
The gale may be sighing, the frost-king astray,
Tomorrow will sparkle in crystalline spray.

Tomorrow with roses is crowned,
A tender eyed sylph o' the May,
Flinging garlands of blossoms around
In a child-like, improvident way.
Today may be barren, a chill in the air;
Tomorrow, sweet spring-life will bud everywhere.

Tomorrow, the birds without fear
Flitting back to the woodlands again,
Will sing for the summer that's here,
A full-throated, ravishing strain.
The world now so silent of bird or of bee,
Tomorrow shall echo with refluent glee.

Tomorrow the babe of the field
From its silk-curtained cradle shall rise;
And spurning the harvest-queen's shield,
Fill the air with a golden surprise.
The seed may be brown in the cell of today
Yet vestured tomorrow in royal array.

Tomorrow is regal for all,
With a scepter of love in her hand:

The weary but wait for her call
To rest in the full fruited land.
O'er the span of today we may tearfully grope,
But the arch of tomorrow is glowing with hope.

Yes, tomorrow, a beautiful day,
Is waiting for you and for me —
Impatient our grief to allay,
Our sorrow-weighed pinions to free.
Why reck we the burden that presses today?
Tomorrow, tomorrow will lift it away.

CICADA-SONG.

SEEMETH the chorus that greets the ear
A dirge for the dying hours,
That wake no more for the passing year,
Spring's voices of birds and flowers?
Or, is it a psalm of love upborne
From this grateful earth of ours?

Unfold us the burden of your song,
Grasshoppers, chirping so
Tender and sweet the whole day long!
Is it of joy or woe
The music that breathes from each blade of grass
In undertone deep and low?

Vainly I list for a jarring tone,
All is so blest to me —
From the cricket that answers beneath the stone
The brown toad hid in the tree,
To the tiniest insect of them all
That helps with the harmony.

Never a pause in the serenade!
Like the glory of ripened corn
It filleth the air through the sun and shade;
While from dusk till the peep of morn
Is a rhythmical pulse in the dreamful night
That of satisfied life seems born.

As the balm of the hay-field about us floats,
So, melody crowneth the haze

Of the yellow ether with choral notes
Through these tuneful autumn days.
Speak! sphinx of the hearth-stone, cricket, dear —
Is the song of sorrow or praise?

Of this I am sure, that you bring to me
Thoughts, the sweetest of any I know;
Of this I am sure, that you sing to me
In tones that are tenderly low,
Of things the dearest that life has brought.
And dearest that hopes bestow.

OCTOBER.

WHAT joy is this which thrills us
With unspeakable delight?
What benison which fills us
To forgetfulness of pain?
What stimulus is nerving us to battle for the right,

As when in hopeful spring-time we tracked its
beacon light?
Whence do our wasted energies a new-born force
attain?
October, stepping cheerily through woodland, field
and fen,
Is ruling with a royal right the willing world
again!

What though November's sleeping breath
May stir the quick'ning gale —
What though a whisp'ring North wind saith,
"Your streams I will enchain" —
What though some far-off tufts of snow may chill-
ing life exhale —
While warmth of living color with radiance fills
the vale,
We dare not by prophetic woe our heritage pro-
fane;
But yield to glad October who smiles from hill
and glen,
Crowned with a gay Bacchante's crown, and
throned for us again!

Why call these "melancholy days,
The saddest of the year?"
Why sing in minor tones of praise
For autumn a refrain?
Who, disenthralled from summer, with wan face loitering near,
But triumphs in his blest release, his joyance all sincere;
And springs with breast unburdened on the richly loaded wain
Of her who wields the golden-rod and sways the hearts of men,
Wreathed in iridian splendor — magnificent again?

Her gracious hand extended,
She bids us cease from care,
And feast, love's labor ended,
On golden-dropping grain.
Our souls have but to open wide to charms so debonair,
And drink the ruddy wine of life from lips 'tis ours to share;
Ay, revel in the joyousness of glowing mount and plain

Aflame with bright October's smile — brighter and
dearer when,
Turning her crimson cheek to go, the pale months
come again.

NATURE'S NUN.

THE priestly trees with crowns all bare,
Attend the pale year's vows,
And sternly stand while deep in prayer
The maiden humbly bows.

Her fadeless charm is hid within
A garb of common gray:
Each glowing color, like a sin,
Laid ruthlessly away.

Oh, strange the power that blights the sun
Soft resting in her hair —
That clips the tresses one by one,
And buries aught so fair!

Meek, shorn and quiet is she now,
  Who erst, by song and smile
And glory of a sunny brow,
  Could all the world beguile.

Yet rues she not her vanished sway
  O'er pleasure born to die,
Who finds at last an open way
  To treasure of the sky.

The leafy shade of June's delight
  No longer looms to screen
November's broad expanse of night
  Where unmasked stars are seen.

Slight, interlacing threads of brown,
  Alone are waving set
Athwart the love-light streaming down —
  A scarcely hindering net —

Between whose wind-blown traceries
  Her vision searches space;
And wins for missing images
  A far diviner grace.

Her ashen gown that bleak winds stir,
  Her closely fastened cross,
With their pure promise seem to her
  More rich than richest loss.

Hence unto infinite hope upsprings
  Her freed soul wise and calm,
From earth-born trammels, while she sings
  A new thanksgiving psalm.

LOVE'S UNIVERSALITY.

WITH statelier splendor than a monarch shows
  Who spreads his purple of magnificence
  To awe the city into reverence,
The setting sun on this lone desert throws
A flood of light, in mingled gold and rose,
  As lavish as if here from crowds immense
  Should rise acclaiming voice of frankincense
Stirred by the grandeur that such grace bestows.

Yet richer blessings with as generous hand,
  Impartial, from God's hand are borne adown —
Borne far to meet the loneliest in the land:
  Look but beneath the cruel-seeming frown,
And see how love-light glistens in the sand,
  Where ravening seas had threatened all to
    drown!

SNOW-CLAD.

(GRACE CHURCH, BROOKLYN.)

ON templed pile in calm repose
  Is robed as though for endless rest —
As though a saint at vesper's close
  Should fold his hands divinely blest;

Or, fain to serve his master yet,
  Should silent paint a pictured prayer
Of ivied stone in frost-work set,
  Illumined by minutest care.

More fair in that each broidering tree,
O'erburdened like a tear-filled eye,
Is mantled with the mystery
Of fallen stars that in them lie.

Swift, flake on flake, new load is laid
Of crowning pressure on the stems;
And still the woven film is made
To hold anew increasing gems.

The whole gray world whose differing grays
Shade tenderly from brown to white,
Transfigured is within the maze
Of snows that yield supernal light.

Still, nothing seems so clothed with grace
So holy in its hoary screen,
As yonder quiet, spire-topped place,
Fresh yesterday with living green;

And vocal with the twitterings
Or myriad sparrows — songs or sighs
Responsive to impatient wings —
All mute today in hushed surprise.

The pictured windows, too, that then
In color chanted to the sun,
Are neutral tinted now, as when
The twilight melts their hues in one.

Such breathless, hallowed ministry
Attends the tranquil, wintry hour,
It scarce were marvelous to see
The pile upborne by mystic power;

Or angels hear — like those we meet,
Who closely drift to heaven's shore —
Saying in accents low and sweet,
"Behold the pure who rest or soar!"

THE CUP OF WATER.

"And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth." — *John xix: 29.*

WATER!" Yes, give me of water, fresh water to drink;
For I am athirst and aweary, ah! wearily dying;
And here on this bed of discomfort where long I've been lying,
So famished and parched and unrestful, I cannot but think:
Oh! had they but given the Saviour fresh water to drink,
When he in his agony, too, was aweary and dying!

One day in far Sychar, he sat on the curb of a well,
And of a Samarian woman asked simply the favor.

She parleyed; while more than she knew, was
the draught that he gave *her*,
Of wisdom — his knowledge her wonder did surely
compel —
Whoever, spake he, will drink of the water of my
living well
Shall nevermore thirst! Why showered he so
lavish his favor?

To him she gave nothing. 'Twas Christ who gave
freely to her.
(Oh, had one but given him water to help his
last anguish!
How could they have seen him, the helper of
others, so languish,
And to give him a cup of cool water one moment
demur?)
Did he ask *me?* And did I, too, parley on level
with her,
Not giving him comfort? Ah, me! then deserve
I this anguish!

"Be peaceful, my child, let not questions disturb
thee in vain;" —

It seemed that the voice which we heard was
the voice of the Saviour —
"Thou need'st not to doubt so, poor suff'rer,
thy Christian behavior,
Whose hand has been always alert for the healing
of pain;
Not one of thy ministries ever was offered in
vain —
'Inasmuch as thou gav'st to the least, gav'st
thou to the Saviour!'"

IN GETHSEMANE.

"Sleep now, and take your rest."— *Mark xiv: 41*

DRAW close, sweet shadows, fold us from the
light;
We're weary, very weary, let us sleep —
Weary of trying watch and ward to keep —
Weary of day and glad that it is night:

So glad the conflict between wrong and right
Has respite, and forgetful we may reap
The calm of soothing slumber, dreamful, deep—
Draw close, sweet shadows, fold us from the light.

Sleep now, if sleep you must, and take your rest;
The sun will hold his orbit still the same,
And, pressing through night's curtains that protest,
Will startle your slow eyelids with his flame,
Till you shall wake to know the Day is best·
Its joy your portion through My finished shame.

THE NEW BIRTH.

"COMPLETE in Christ"—and can it be,
That quite apart from human worth,
Simply by coming, Lord, to thee,
We know the bliss of heavenly birth?

"Complete in Christ" — the words ring out
With strange, sweet music, when we see
They mean Christ's beauty wrapped about
The erring soul mysteriously;

That His warm, penetrating smile
Melts, all unseen, the rime of sin:
The sunshine only screened awhile
Of love-transmuted life within —

Now pure in perfectness; as though
No mark were there of any blight —
Not one stained memory left to show
Its shadow in the primal light.

"Complete in Christ" — the words have grown
To untold cadence when we dare
To claim Christ's merit as our own:
Our own through child-like faith and prayer.

A TRUE LIFE.

A ROCK of softened beauty stands serenely
Among the hills that rise above the shore
And upward lifts luxuriant foliage greenly,
Of nature's fadeless store;
Turning no pallor to the threatening blast,
Nor blooming richer that the storm is past;

But brave alike beneath the sunny sparkles
Of smiling day that tips with gold each crest,
Or, when a cold, gray cloud of winter darkles
Its outlook to the west;
Ever, spice-laden, planted firm and still,
Unmoved to break with the Eternal Will.

So, even as in this laurelled rock, whose glory
It is to look aloft with steadfast brow,
I read, strong soul, within thy life the story
Of faith no storm can bow;
Nor soft and liquid wooings turn aside
From truth, on which thy patient feet abide.

And if the stone beneath the verdure seemeth
To fret the wave, which cannot but caress —
The wave which fonder growing, idly dreameth
The rock may some day bless,
By bending low a kingly crown to heed
The homage which is but its royal meed —

Be sure, brave heart, a blessedness unfailing,
The sea knows in the rock's resisting grace,
Diviner far than if her song availing
'Twere lured from its high place,
To lose in mists below a heavenward view,
Nor longer stand, as thou, divinely true.

FILMS.

SOFT is the film between the vale and hill,
Shrouding the winter's frost from summer's glow —
The subtile mist that golden days distil
When summer's footstep lingers loath to go:

Yes, soft and tender is the purple haze
That veils the mountain from the valley's gaze.

And tender is the film that holds the view
Of coming fortune from the fearless eye,
Else would the distant upland's checkered hue
Bring disenchantment to the lowlands nigh:
Yes, very tender is the mystic line
That hides tomorrow in a fold divine.

A SONNET

TO THE SONNET MAKER.

NO couch of roses (yielding sweets exprest
Of endless summer), with blue canopy
Wrought of the whole wide heaven's immensity,
And starred with stars from boundless east to west,
Is that on which the sonneteer may rest!
If cradled so, with fancy's pinions free
To breathe unstrained the breath of poesie,
Soft were his stages to life's laurelled crest.

Mark, now, what liberty doth him await,
In whom the sonnet's rule has preference bred
To find repose in so constrained estate:

Parnassian meads his muse's feet may tread,
And he be borne by them to beauty's gate —
But, bound a prisoner on Procrustean bed!

VASA MARCH.

FROM THE SWEDISH OF Z. TOPELIUS.

I.

IN northern frost our cradle stood,
By frothing stream and shuddering flood;
Yet grew we there 'mid ice and storm.

As sturdy pines that snow-drifts warm—
The pines that grow
Beneath the snow,
And crowned with green
Stand up serene,
To smile above the wintry scene;
And crowned with green
Stand up serene,
To smile above the wintry scene.

II.

A thousand waves together meet,
Where Finnish homes their coming greet;
And Finland's sons like waves embrace,
O, parent-land, within thy grace.
With joy they bear
Thy crest in air;
Full blest to be
A help to thee,
Whom Vasa served as none but he:
Full blest to be
A help to thee,
Whom Vasa served as none but he.

III.

Our brave North-land! Our Fatherland!
On rock-bound shores thy children stand;
Oh! teach us so thy strength to be,
As thou art strong to break the sea!
Made steadfast thus,
Grow, thou, in us;
While we with hand
And heart withstand
All foes of our dear Finnish land!
While we with hand
And heart withstand
All foes of our dear Finnish land!

THE ARMY OF SPRING.

TENS of thousands and ten times ten,
Clad in yellow and purple and pink —
Little folks marching like stalwart men
Up from the dark to the summer's brink!

Yet can it be dark where such robes are made?
Surely the looms in the light must be
That colored these uniforms shade by shade,
And fashioned the rare embroidery!

Wherefore the rising — can any one say —
Of hosts that rush from the realm of night,
Letting no hindrances bar the way,
Bursting upon us with joy bedight?

Tens of thousands and ten times ten,
Vested in violet, blue and gold —
Little folks marching like stalwart men
Up through the winter's rime and mold.

Come they to tell us that down below,
There where the baby lies hid in flowers,
Down in the hollow, under the snow,
Is a brighter world than this world of ours?

Tens of thousands and ten times ten,
Gay in scarlet and green and white —
Little folks marching like stalwart men,
Muster before us a princely sight:

Gonfalons floating and flags out-spread,
Lily bells ringing and censers swung,
Bonneted, plumed, and with slippered tread,
The sweetest cavalcade ever sung!

What is their mission? Which of us knows,
Save that they bless us and pass away,
Destined to scatter the seed that grows
And blooms in battalions here today?

CHILD LIFE.

TO M. B. O.

MY precious, sweet darling, with wonder-wide eyes,
Has stept from the room for a minute;
Yet still all around me unconsciously lies
The print of her presence within it.

Soft pillowed to rest near a lesson's loose page,
And folded the bed-linen under,
Is Dolly, *her* darling! At what given age
Do girls outgrow Doll-dom, I wonder?

Or women, I might say, since fondly I gaze
In a mood that is almost maternal
On the patient-faced manikin, thinking of days
Like my daughter's, delightsomely vernal;

When a doll of my own had a sweet human way,
A sort of expression that blesses;
When I cared for her comfort by night and by day,
And fancied she answered caresses.

It is sympathy speaks for my twelve summer's old
Little girl, in her loyal affection,
Which she holds half in secret; half fears to unfold,
Lest a smile might ensue on detection.

But wherefore a smile, if her school-hours between
She but changes one joy for another;
And back into Elf-land again is a queen
Of the realm — and a right royal mother?

Too soon will the fancies of fairy-land fade;
Too soon it is robbed of its splendor;
Too soon, I am sure, are the little ones made
Their kingdom of youth to surrender.

Too soon is dear Santa Claus put to the blush,
And his agents reduced to confusion,
By the lore of the wise-acres whispering, "Hush!
You know it is all a delusion."

Too soon do the snow-flakes seem nothing but snow;
But, ah! we are glad to remember,
That once they were messengers sent here to show
A near twenty-fifth of December.

Then, darling, my darling with wonder-wide eyes,
From which the sweet mists are not shaken,
We will pray that together we ever grow wise,
Yet never from dreamland awaken.

That even though three-score-and-ten be our years,
We may sail, without fear of demerit,
Into havens of fancy, uplifted from tears,
Which children divinely inherit.

BRET.

A Spanish truffle-dog, whose amateur-performances, in the Kaatskills, contributed over one hundred dollars to the *Tribune* "Fresh Air Fund."

TWO brownest of eyes, soft peering
Through a shock of shaggy hair;
Two brownest of ears, down drooping;
And a tail (whisked everywhere)
Brown, like his curly jacket,
At the tip a white plume set,
And the softest of snowy bosoms,
Has our frolicsome, kindly Bret.

But not for his brave appearance,
Though that is unique indeed,
Do we value our foreign poodle
Of notable Spanish breed;
'Tis more for his comprehension,
And his willing way and quick,
To learn and to do at bidding
The oldest and newest trick.

"Speak?" Yes, he speaks at asking,
In loud or in lower key;
Walks, on his hind feet jumping,
As cunningly as can be;
Plays dead, while nothing will rouse him,
Though you shake him and tease and coax,
Till one shouts "The police are coming!"
When he's up, and enjoys the hoax.

He begs, and he catches biscuit
On the bridge of his nostrils laid;
Sits, pipe in mouth, with a cap on,
Like an old judge grave and staid;
Finds, with the truest instinct,
What is hidden in "hide and seek;"
Steals handkerchiefs "for a living"
From pockets whereout they peek.

Charles Reade named a dog once Tonic —
A compound of *steal*, *bark*, *whine;*
But Bret, you see, is an actor,
And judged on a higher line.

Besides, he's more than a tonic,
In the sense of the novelist's wit:
He's a genuine, jolly companion,
Full of gayety, "go," and grit.

But rhyme is slow in rehearsal
Of the varied things he will do:
He bounds through a hoop, he dances,
He carries and fetches too;
In short, he's a wonderful creature—
A lion-like, playful pet.
Only a dog, yet splendid
In his dogship is our Bret.

THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS.

A THOUSAND and twenty singing birds
Are chanting a matin song
To my list'ning heart, in the unknown words
That to Switzerland's birds belong.

Yet, shutting my eyes, I never would know
If the woods of this old-world land
Were other than ours, while musical so
With a rapturous singing band.

One couldn't imagine a foreign tongue
Is sounding such clear, sweet notes;
But rather be sure that the strains are sung
By our own little songsters' throats.

We'd never surmise that the meadow-lark
With his wings to the green fields set,
Would only give heed to our voice and hark,
If we called him an *alouette!*

That the *rossignol's* song in the Switzer's vale,
With its melody pure and free,
Would faint in the speech of our nightingale;
We wouldn't believe it could be!

Nor would it, my dear. We are right — we're right!
One language the birds have — one;
They use it by day and they use it by night,
They use it in shadow and sun:

'Tis the language of lovers — the same, the same
Wherever its harmony grows;
The language of music that hasn't a name
Save that which the whole world knows.

So we'll listen, we two, with accustomed ear,
To the spring that is fully awake;
And know we're together — one there, one here:
At home and on Leman's Lake.

Geneva, April 26, 1878.

REMEMBER.

IF within your crystal soul a question
Of the color of my passion vexes,
If its lavish incense thrown around you
By excess perplexes;
Know no aureoled saint I hold above you —
Remember that I love you.

If love's perfumed air expands in blessing,
Only when its open sweets surround you;
If from its pervading presence parted,
Doubtings may confound you;
Know that never doubts of mine disprove you —
Remember that I love you.

If your features warmed by my caressing
Glow with a divine illumination
But to cool and fade in distance lonely,
Stirred by no pulsation;
Know my soul refuses to reprove you —
Remember that I love you.

If you cannot answer all the fullness
Of the measure of my heart's devotion,
If your leaning toward me signals merely
A reflected motion;
Know that even so 'tis joy to move you —
Remember that I love you.

For, in this "I love you" is a meaning
Far beyond the ken of simple fancy:

Measureless in love's enlightened language
Love's significancy!
Know, of worth attested, I approve you —
Believe me that I love you.

THE LAUREATE SINGER.

CROWNED is the sea supreme among the poets —
Voicing unmeasured thought:
If to it turn the soul grief-burdened, lo! its
Waves, with sadness fraught,
Will sing with sobbing, sympathetic moan,
A murmuring song in sorrow's monotone,
Attuned to grief alone.

If bright the hour, the soul with rapture thrilling
Oblivious to all ill,
The self-same ocean moves in glad fulfilling
Of some mysterious will,
That bids the tenderest notes to tremble there
Beneath a crimpled veil — so happy, fair
The smile the waters wear!

Yet if the soul be chafed, its joy forsaking
In pulses fierce and strong;
The hurrying billows emulant, seem waking
Grave echoes, which belong
To storms, that fret and foam in latent wrath,
And mutter low upon their surly path,
The voice that anger hath.

This singer never falters in expression
Of singer's subtlest art;
But holds a master-key by pre-possession
To fit each throbbing heart —
Whose ban the lashings of the deep repeat;
Whose praise the swelling tide so wondrous sweet,
Resounds with praise complete.

Man's mood may scale the gamut, grave or tender—
It matters not — the sea
Responsive utterance will freely render
From its immensity:
Its soundless depth no fetters know to thrall
The motions, rhythmic and reciprocal,
That, infinite, answer all.

IN SARONY'S STUDIO.

YOUR happiest expression, if you please,
I'll do the rest — arrange these folds for you.
Your eye-lids you may wink — just so — with ease.
Now glance here: that will do.
Once more.
Don't move! The posture is all grace;
That head-turn is a very sweet surprise;
Yes, quite perfection is that fall of lace.
There — lift, a thought, your eyes!"

('Tis done.) "All right! — a vignette now, my boy" —
In cheery tones rings out upon the air
Like to a boatswain calling "Ship, ahoy!" —
Presto! — the vignette's there.

Hark! waves of rippling laughter from the screen —
"Nay, sirens, I can manage only one;
Soon on the card I'll paint your fairy queen;
But leave us, pray, alone!"

"The negative? ah, that I never show,
Except in cases quite exceptional.
I must? Then, from a brood of birdlets, know
I honor '*must*' and 'shall.'

"Aha! my little fellow, are *you* here,
To make your pretty face a picture gay?
Well, stand upon this rock, my little dear;
Fold arms — and look this way."
"All right!"
"Yes, madam, yes, it is all right;
On Monday you can come the proof to see."
"And you, sir?

— What! you think that proof
a fright!
Nay, nay, it must not be:
We'll try again . . . . . But not today, sir, no,
I'm mad, quite mad with all I have to do;
Morning and noon till night, I'm thronged just so;
On Wednesday come, at two."

"Oh, for blest rainy days! Not dew to flower
Is sweeter than the cloud to his parched brain,
Who weds the sun and soulless crowds each hour
In triturating pain.

"In some bright moments I am bade rejoice,
When sympathetic souls have faith in me,
As when fair Kellogg, with her silvery voice
Of rarest minstrelsy,
Accepts my pose."
"I cry, *divine! divine!*
But there are some their will 'gainst mine array,
And mimicking fixed stars, deign but to shine
One resolute, fixed way."

"Such make the artist in me cry with pain
Over the wearisome and futile hour,

So wrought to passion are the nerves which strain
To lift to light each flower."

"Yet still I triumph. As when at command
Of Art, Ristori felt the fire in me,
And gave me Marie Antoinette, as grand
As if a human sea
Of earnest hearts were pulsing to her spell!
Such moments are restoratives of ease —
But, pardon!
You will come tomorrow? Well,
At ten, then, if you please."

THE FOOLISH NUNS.

NOT heard of "the boy and wolf?" Nor the girl,
Who cried "Fire!" to her final woe?
Then possibly not of the nuns' mad plot
At Capo San Martino?

This Southern headland of ancient Gaul
Stands out in bluest of seas,
And its breezes blow with the sweets that flow
From tropical-fruited trees.

'Twas ages back (in a misty year),
Some centuries — may be ten —
That the convent here nursed a brooding fear
Of the capturing Saracen.

So timid the nuns at the Cape became,
They planned with their neighbors brave,
If the bells should ring with a quickened swing,
To fly to the fold and save.

One night in the winter's coldest air,
These Narbonensians heard
The bells ring out, and with song and shout,
They were true to their given word.

They came from the hill, from the plain they came,
To Capo San Martino;
They breasted the blast from a sea-storm cast —
They rivaled the wind — when, lo!

In the gateway only the nuns are found
Kneeling, as each one tells
How they thought to test, of their friends the best,
By ringing the convent bells.

Alas! alas! for the foolish nuns—
Not long was it ere the foe
Made the 'larum ring, yet no answer bring
To Capo San Martino.

The men of the Narbonensis heard,
But they laughed, "It is only jest;
We will brave no more either sea or shore,
Where the convent lies at rest."

So the nuns were stolen, the convent sacked,
And now but its ruins glow
In the setting sun, when the day is done,
At Capo San Martino.

THE BEGGARS' FORTUNE.

SOME good or ill — sad fate or fair,
To chill or kiss us on our way —
We have the sun, the sky, the air,
To cheer our effort day on day:
We have these royal blessings free
Despite untoward destiny.

When good and ill the balance try,
We need but smile and watch the scale,
Sure that the sun and air and sky
To favoring turn it will not fail —
That nature's ever generous boon
Will overweigh a leaden noon.

Yea, good or ill may come and go,
With darkened face or face of light,
Since sun and air and sky will glow,
Or soon or late, serenely bright;
And whether good or ill befall
Light, color, fragrance pierces all.

O, 'tis a precious art to learn,
(Better than alchemist has won
Who common things to gold would turn)
One's heart to open to the sun
And sky and air! That never ill
May have a chance the space to fill.

THE MIRROR OF STEEL.

IS gallant steed stands close beside,
Caparisoned and gay,
For soon the knight to war will ride,
From Lady Blanche away.

The cold, bright armor of the time
Is girt about his form,
But underneath, with faith sublime
In love his heart is warm.

The Lady Blanche is lithe and fair,
In softest silk arrayed;
While floating folds of golden hair
Make sunshine round the maid.

Diviner meed to him she seems
Than guerdon best of fame;
And o'er his face uprushing dreams
The sweet belief proclaim.

Her blue eyes' earnest glance he seeks,
As hand grows warm in hand,
And thrills to see her mantling cheeks—
He does not understand

That something else than love's conceit
The Lady Blanche inspires
To wear the glowing counterfeit
Of love's ennobling fires—

That while he folds her with his arm,
His polished steel returns
A flattering image of each charm
For which his bosom burns;

And that her form's reflected grace
Fills all the maiden's breast,
Not one rift left of tender space
For Love to build his nest!

Yet not alone in olden day
Of glazen shields and casques,
Has vanity been known to play
With love in which it basks.

'Tis sorry truth too oft, we know,
The mirror in the breast,
(That bravest lovers frankly show,
Their faith to manifest,)

To maids like Lady Blanche reveals
The one they dearest prize,
Stirring the rosy blush that steals
From finger-tips to eyes!

Still, self-admiring beauty dares
Demand its burnished glass;
Still, noblest knight most often wears
A crystal-pure cuirass!

SONG OF THE OLD YEAR.

AWAKE, awake, old Janus!
Your double visage show,
And open wide the gateway
Through which I needs must go:
Through which I needs must wander,
A ghost of former time,
And bear to land immortal
A record of this clime.

My royal life is ebbing,
And though I lusty seem,
Tomorrow none will know me
But as a faded dream.
Behind your closing portal
I shall enshrouded be,
Gathered with all the ages
In past infinity.

The days, the months, the seasons,
Have loyal vassals been,
With faithful fingers weaving
The annals that I glean;
But, now, in festal garments
They wait the coming king;
Ready to bear his mandates,
And tribute still to bring.

A vision humbling truly,
While death, too, draweth near;
For I a world have governed
With naught to interfere —
Naught say I? Naught to check me?
Old Year, thy pride withdraw;
But delegated power had'st thou —
Thou, too, art slave to law!

A larger power controls us,
And none so regal be
But higher throned, within us,
Supreme is Deity.

And yet to meet good service
A realm is still in store,
O'er which thy rod found worthy
Shall lift thee evermore.

Then open wide, old Janus,
The gate of passing time;
I hear the faint beginning
Of fate's foreboding chime:
My spirit drops its fetters
The far beyond to delve —
Uprise, swing wide, old Janus,
The stroke is at the Twelve!

THE DIVINE WILL.

YEA, as thou wilt, benignant Power!
I crave no will of mine;
But ever through life's little hour
To freely yield to thine.

Go to, thou rash, impatient hope —
My will that seeks today —
God's times have everlasting scope,
And faultless Will obey.

Just as thou wilt, benignant Power!
I crave no will but Thine,
That ever through life's little hour
Thy perfect Will be mine.

GENERAL GORDON.

Ah, God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple, great ones gone
Forever and ever by. — *Tennyson.*

HE is come, he is come, we have seen him
Far over the ocean's span;
We have seen him a hero in China,
And, too, in the wild Soudan —

One of our race — and we glory
That one of our race should be
So brave, and gentle, and loyal
To chivalry's creed as he!

In the bloom of his early manhood,
The masterful power was seen
That he drew from a clan of Scotsmen,
Faithful to England's queen.
Even then, in Sebastopol's trenches —
Where cannon and grape and shell
Ravaged with red wings of slaughter —
Wounded yet smiling he fell.

All his promise of youth that budded
In so grave, disjointed time,
Flowered into generous fullness
In Asia's ardent clime:
There, quelled he with "wand of magic,"
The troublesome Taïping-horde;
Thence, sowed he the banks of Nilus
With love's divinest word.

True soldier, none doubted his courage!
Fear fashioned no terrors for one
Who trusted his shibboleth, Duty,
In shadow as well as in sun;
Who, ruling Meroe and Ben Naga,
Where sepultured kings once trod,
Uplifted the Cross for the Crescent,
And for Allah the Christian's God.

Oh, tender and wise and lofty,
The heart and head of the man
Who ruled with a quiet spirit,
Long years in the wild Soudan;
Who gained the faith of the Arab,
Till El Mahdi's force today,
In worshipful fear of the Gordon,
Falls silently from his way.

Yes, the man is come, who is simple
And great in his earnest life —
Ever a friend of the friendless,
And alway a soother of strife —

And he it is who is lifted,
A lode-star of truth and right,
To comfort Egypta's troubles
With his swift supplies of light.

If he fail, he is still a hero —
If he fail, he is still the man
Who, type of the Heavenly Ruler,
Has walked through the wild Soudan,
Touching to calm the fever
Of restless Ethiop-foes —
Cheering with hope and justice
The tortured Moslem's woes.

Yet how can he fail, whose valor
Is born of a heart so pure
That Sir Galahad's tenfold prowess
Could never have been more sure?
Face to face with the hosts of Satan,
Face to face with the enemy's breath,
He is victor of all who is victor
Of himself — in life and death.

A JACQUEMINOT.

A ROSE from my lady's bouquet —
Did she give it to me? Ah, no;
I only gathered it where it lay,
Dropped from my lady's rare bouquet:
Noisettes and *les Jacqueminots*
Flushing the air below.

"My lady," *mine* did I say?
Not even her name I know,
Who carried the rare bouquet;
Yet a rose fell out of it in my way,
Red as a rose can blow,
And met by an equal glow.

What matter to any one, pray,
That I tenderly hold it — so?
Velvety, blushing, bright as the day
The rose and the lady. Kiss I may,
Through the bloom its petals show,
Her cheek in the Jacqueminot!

Kiss it and dream alway,
That a drop from her heart's red flow
Sought, as it fell from her sweet bouquet,
To mingle its soul with mine for aye —
For aye, wherever I go —
In the breath of a Jacqueminot.

FORM AND FRAGRANCE.

I.

SOME homes there are but meager
In limit of house and ground;
No traces around of the graces
Of luxury to be found:
Yet joy in the children's faces
And treasures of love abound.

II.

The pansy's pride is eager
  Its purple and gold to show,
While tenderer violets render
  Less glow, but a sweet o'erflow;
And sweetness is more than splendor,
  As souls that have tried them know.

III.

When night comes on with rigor
  Of death to darken the day—
When December's latest ember
  Of life is shrunken away—
Which will the Lord remember,
  Spirit or substance, say?

SUMMER SILENCE.

THERE is stillness, rapturous stillness, in the August afternoon,
Though the low swung leaflets quiver to the cricket's drowsy tune.
In the cornfields, gilded sentries face unmoved the cloudless west,
While yellow moths dart through them in disdain of idle rest;
Yet no rustle from their transit do we hear within the pause —
Not the faintest sound of motion from the pinions' floating gauze:
Nay; so noiseless is the poising and the flitting of each wing,
That the silence is but richer for the golden hush they bring.

The droning of the crickets — did it break the breathless swoon,

Of the half unconscious senses, in this August
afternoon?
Did it wake the tiniest fairy in her rosy sleep,
pray, did it?
A thousand times we answer with the Katy-Did —
"Nay, did it?"
A thousand times we answer to the cricket's lazy
drone,
That the silence is more silent for such tender
monotone.

Oh, the echoes of the silence of this strangely
vocal hour,
Outflowing from the honey-bee that hums above
the flower,
Upwelling from the locust-leaf in unseen murmurs
there,
And throbbing through a world of life whose home
is in the air!

Yes; the golden day is dreamful through the
music summer breeds,
— Her myriad voices quickened like her myriad
flowering seeds —

And the silence is intenser with its presence whispered so,
By the weird cicada-chorus and the moths' aerial glow:
By the thrill of praise ascending from garden, field and grove —
Tuneful silence that keeps measure with unuttered peace and love.

HER GARDEN.

WITH spade and rake she sought her garden plot,
When bright brown thrushes singing came
To bronze the hedge.
Sang she, too, with pure aim
All graceless growth to harrow out, and not
Leave aught unseemly.
Cold the day or hot,

She delved and weeded, thinking thus to shame
More careless gardening; and to win a name
For toothsome fruit which should not be forgot.

Paul plants, Apollos waters, but increase
Must come from God.
Through unseen faults of fence
Crept foxes, while tired nature caused surcease
Of care.
Health came, but no sun shining. Hence,
The new seeds failed to bloom. The old bloom dead—
Alas! my barren hope, she sighing said.

A "ROSE OF THE ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS."

TO O. J.

EN blesséd years of favoring sun and dew
Have wrought with tireless, tributary care
To lift my bud into a blossom rare
'Mong rarest roses.

Pure mother-fingers, too,
Have plucked the weeds that pressed the rich soil through,
Till petal after petal spreads to air
Transparent loveliness.
Methinks, nowhere
Sweet maiden charms infold a heart more true.
Therefore to me should the dear Master say:
"Son, fearless ask, thy parent-hope to fill
Whatever thou would'st have of sweeter, higher,
Or more fair bestowal" — I would answer "Nay,"
Yet reverently thankful to the Will,
"Thou can'st not add one grace to my desire."

TO "A PERFECT WOMAN NOBLY PLANNED."

IS said that Rev'rence upon silence waits,
Fearing the misconceptions that pursue
The frank avowal of the simple true;
That when Expression swings impassioned gates
And cold convention's bulwark violates,
Only the mask of homage passes through!
And yet 'tis simplest truth that reaches you,
When your sweet praise my voice reiterates.
For when a soul's rare radiance doth command
The worship of the few — who understand
A woman's trinity of perfectness —
As well the songs of seraphim can die
About the Throne, as one stand mutely by,
Dumb to the being fashioned so to bless!

ERRATA.

Page 76. — In last words of George Sand, for *Laisser* read *Laissez.*

Page 86. — In thirteenth line, for *peace* read *place.*